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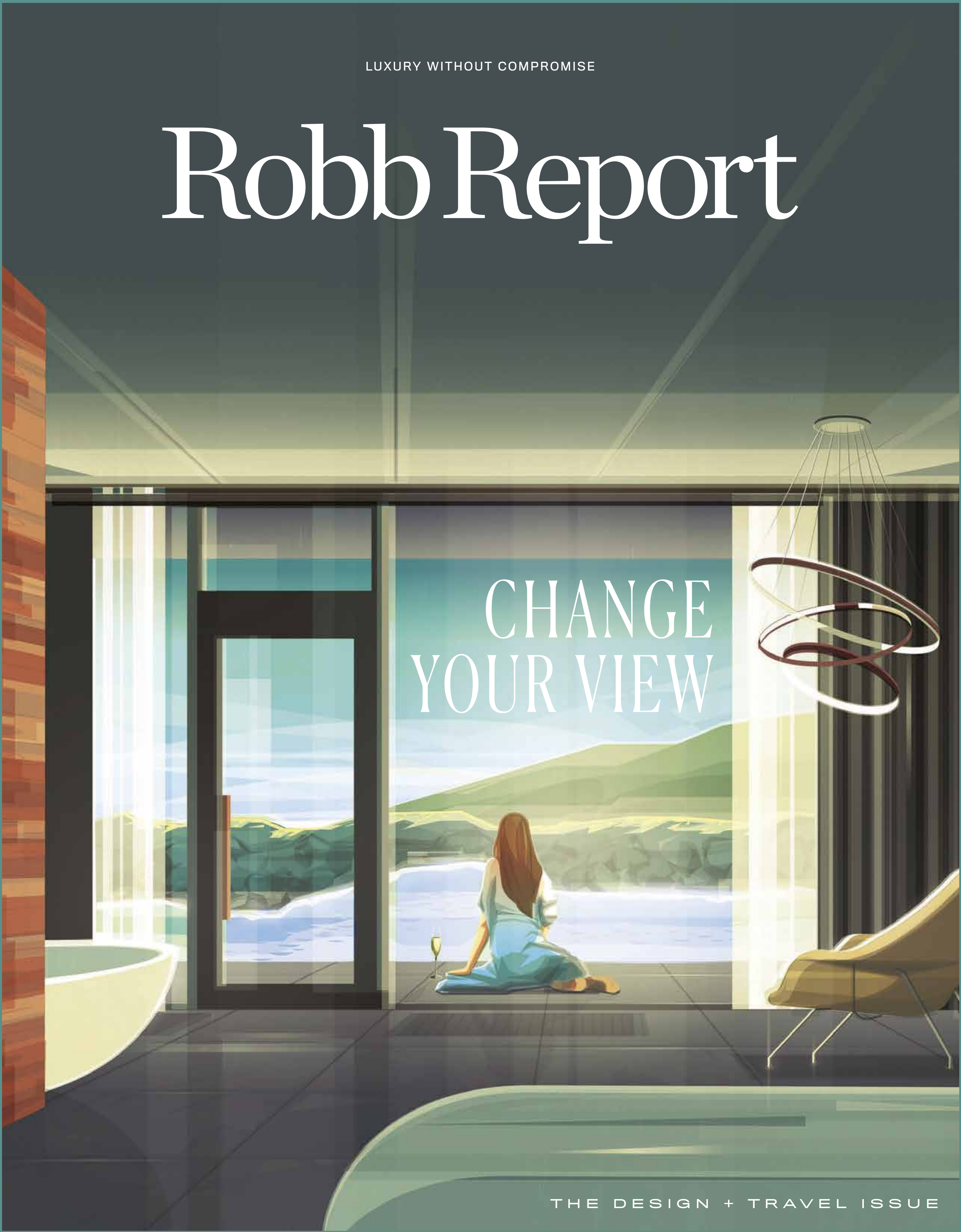

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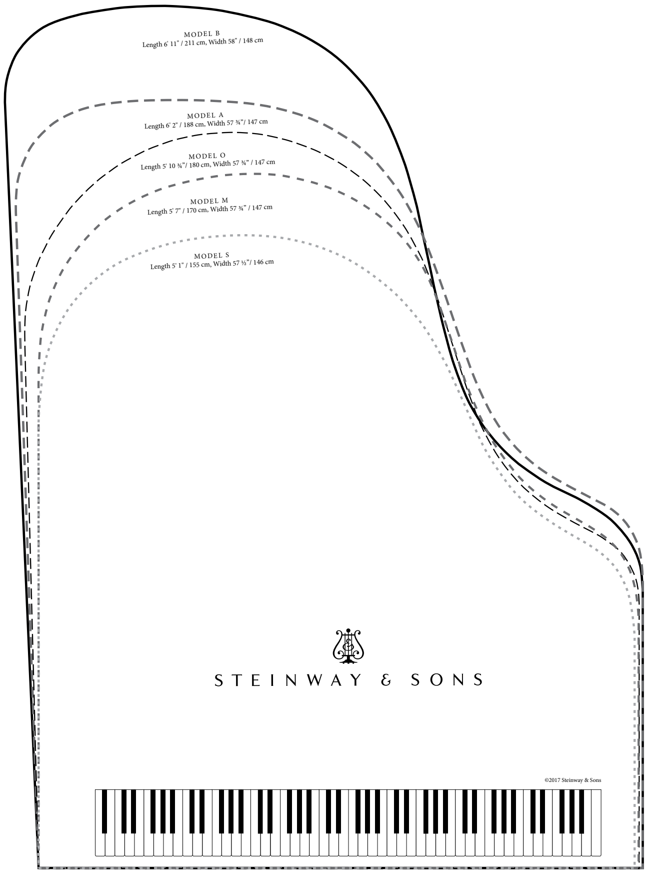
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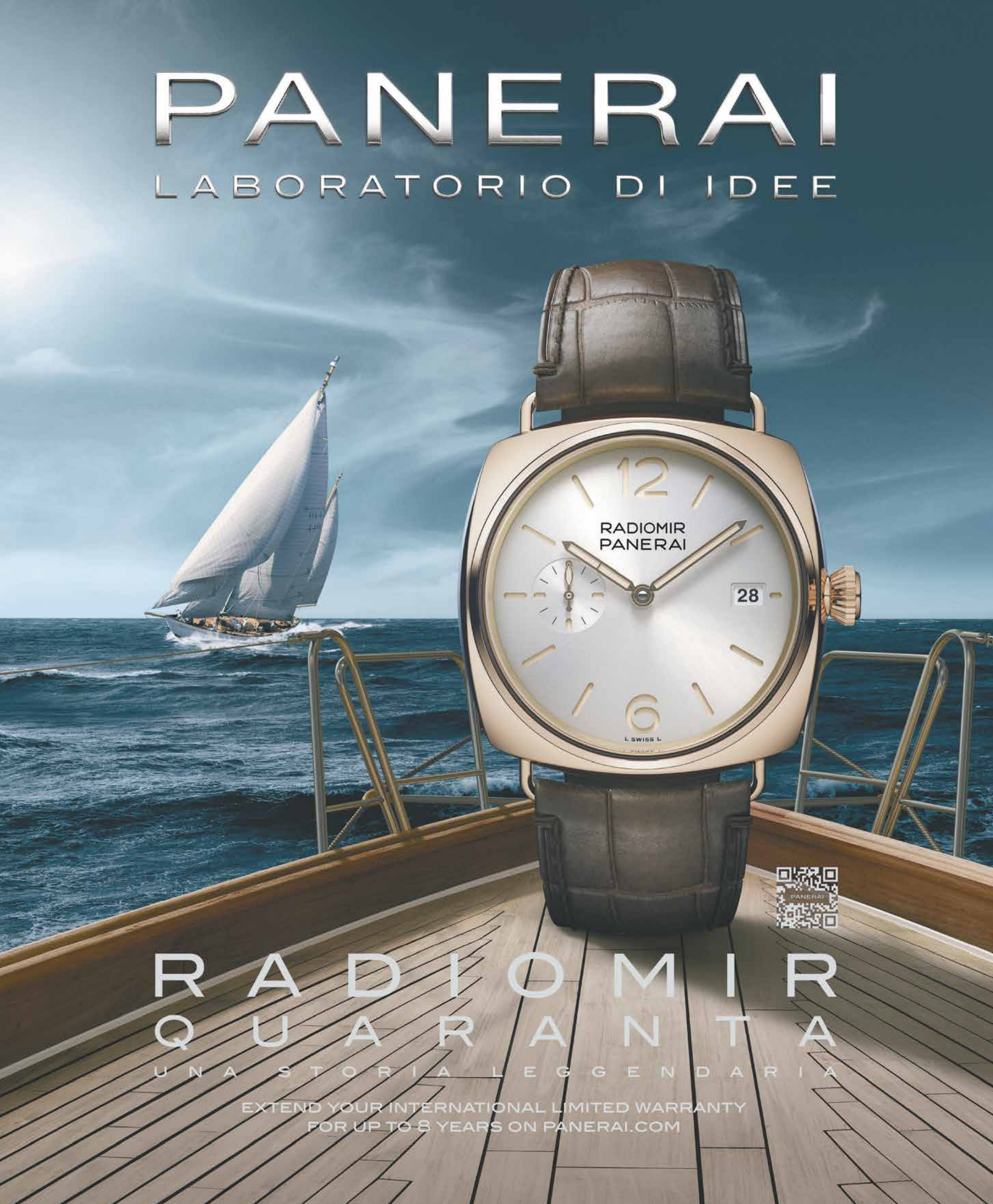
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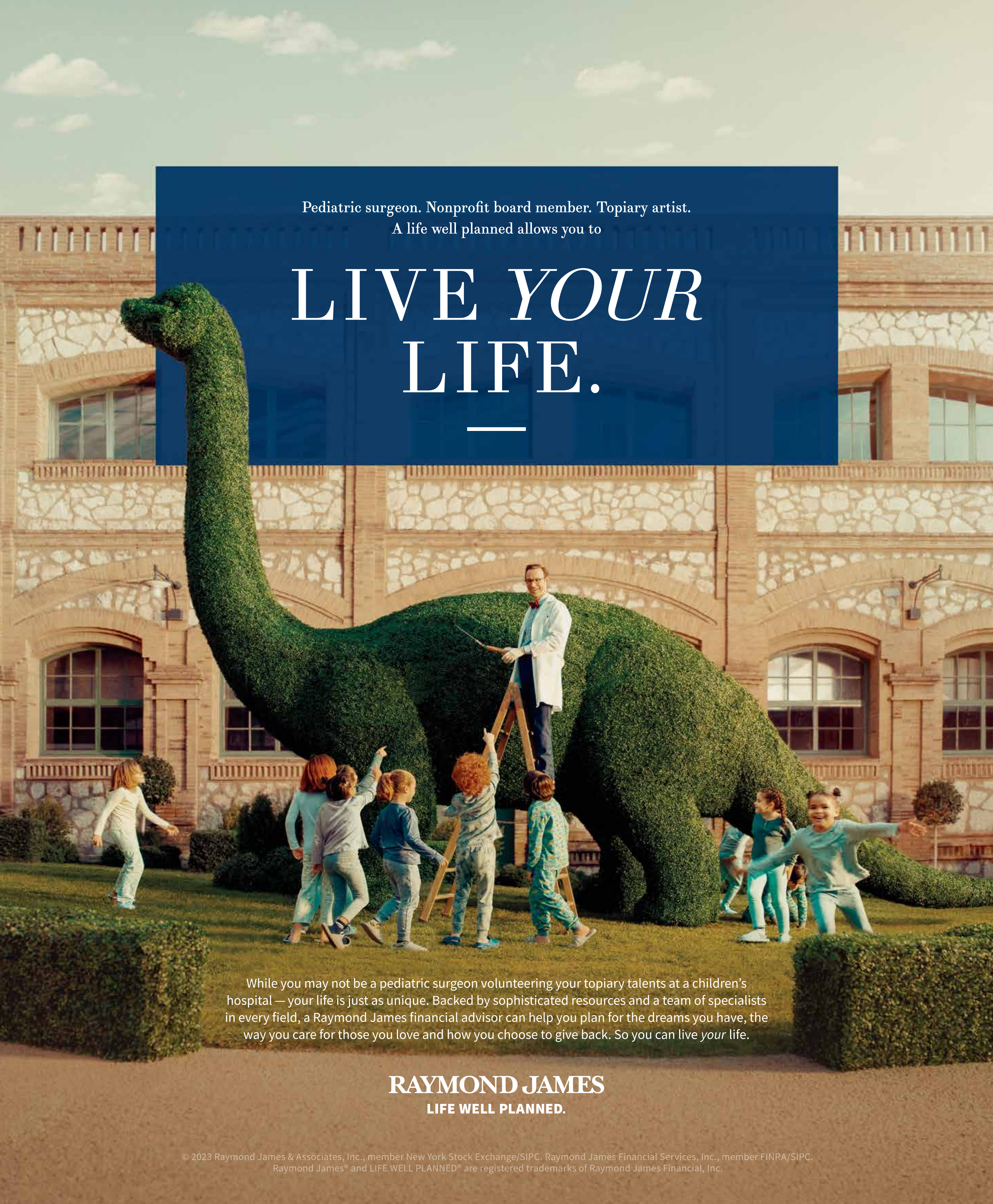

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CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHERS
Janelle Jones, Tom Parker, Joshua Scott, Weston Wells

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Lars Leetaru, Sergio Picazo

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PUBLISHER
LBAHRENBURG@ROBBREPORT.COM

Cristina Cheever
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, RR1 & LIVE MEDIA
310.589.7713, CRISTINAC@ROBBREPORT.COM

Edward Cortese
VICE PRESIDENT, BRAND PARTNERSHIPS
ECORTESE@ROBBREPORT.COM

Adam Fox
VICE PRESIDENT, INTERNATIONAL SALES & PARTNERSHIPS
+44.7505.153984, AFOX@ROBBREPORT.COM

Emma Jenks-Daly
VICE PRESIDENT, MARKETING
EJENKSDALY@ROBBREPORT.COM

ADVERTISING SALES
SARAH ANSARI | JEWELRY AND FASHION DIRECTOR
212.201.1120, SANSARI@ROBBREPORT.COM
GREGORY BRUNO | AUTOMOTIVE SALES
212.230.0284, GREGORYB@ROBBREPORT.COM
STEVE DINUNZIO | REAL ESTATE (DEVELOPMENTS) & HOME FURNISHINGS DIRECTOR
978.264.7561, STEVED@ROBBREPORT.COM
JODY DUNOWITZ | MARINE, SOUTHEAST TRAVEL/CARIBBEAN & CIGARS DIRECTOR
561.417.1616, JODYD@ROBBREPORT.COM
FLORENCE ESPLIN | ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, INTERNATIONAL
+44(0)7879.290.943, FESPLIN@ROBBREPORT.COM
EARL ESTEP | WATCH DIRECTOR
978.264.7557, EARL.ESTEP@ROBBREPORT.COM
DANYA GERSTEIN | TRAVEL, GROOMING & CONSUMER ELECTRONICS DIRECTOR
212.230.0215, DANYAG@ROBBREPORT.COM
MARION LOWRY | AVIATION, TRAVEL & AUTOMOTIVE/WESTERN REGION
310.589.7732, MARIONL@ROBBREPORT.COM
KRISTIE NILSSON | REAL ESTATE
212.398.1690, KNILSSON@ARTNEWS.COM.
JASON RUSSELL | WINE & SPIRITS DIRECTOR
317.413.6429, JRUSSELL@ROBBREPORT.COM
LUCIANO BERNARDINI DE PACE | ITALY
+39.02.2316.4148, BERARDINI@BERARDINI.IT
ALEXANDRA YOUNG | MIDDLE EAST
+917.52.688.2622, ALEX@KONEXINTERNATIONAL.COM
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+852.2905.3217, YVONNE.YEUNG@NEXUSMEDIAASIA.COM

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Nicholas Foulkes

A contributing editor at *Vanity Fair* and the *Financial Times,* Foulkes is also a long-time international reporter and the author of over two dozen books on history and the arts. In "On a Roll" (p. 128), he recounts what he found most fascinating during a recent trip to Cuba. "First, the most amazing Partagás piramide anyone has ever enjoyed—think of it like booking a standard airport car rental and being given the keys to a Ferrari," he says. "Second, the news from nonagenarian master blender Arnaldo Vichot that Yasser Arafat liked his bespoke cigars so strong that each had to be rolled with two leaves of powerful *ligero.*"

Katie Kelly Bell

Bell is an award-winning freelance journalist specializing in wine, spirits, food, and travel. Over the past 15 years, she's regularly contributed to *Virtuoso, Forbes,* and *Decanter,* among many others. In "Wine Before Dinner" (p. 32), she explores the viticulture-first ethos behind Argentine winery Catena Zapata's first restaurant, in Mendoza. "I was most surprised to learn that Mendoza, one of the most arid places on earth and well-known for its meat-centric cuisine, is actually a fantastic region for vegetables, especially heirloom tomatoes."

Sergio Picazo

Born and raised in Madrid, Picazo started his career as an illustrator while obtaining a master's in graphic design and advertising production in 2014. He counts music, architecture, and photography as major influences and often captures whatever catches his interest in the pages of his sketchbook. His detailed, vector-style art is featured on this month's cover. "I always try to tell a story," he explains. "I rely on light and its effects on the existing elements in the image."

Abigail Montanez

A native of New Jersey, Montanez is a staff writer at *Robb Report* with nearly a decade of experience working in both print and digital publishing. In this month's Genius at Work (p. 66), she chatted with the craftsmen at Chelsea Bindery in London, who use century-old techniques to restore exceedingly rare editions to their former glory. "It was really cool to see the process from start to finish," she enthuses. "These are not only books but true works of art."

Weston Wells

Wells is an editorial and commercial photographer who is no stranger to documenting the people and places around him. For this issue, he shot Gabriel Hendifar, the artistic director of New York–based design studio Apparatus, for The Answers (p. 50). "I had met Gabriel a few years before, so it was great to reconnect with him," he says. "The Apparatus office is like a film set, so there was no shortage of beautiful locations and surfaces. It was the week after daylight savings, and it was one of the first days it felt like springtime in New York. Always a plus."

NICK FOULKES: FREDDIE FOULKES

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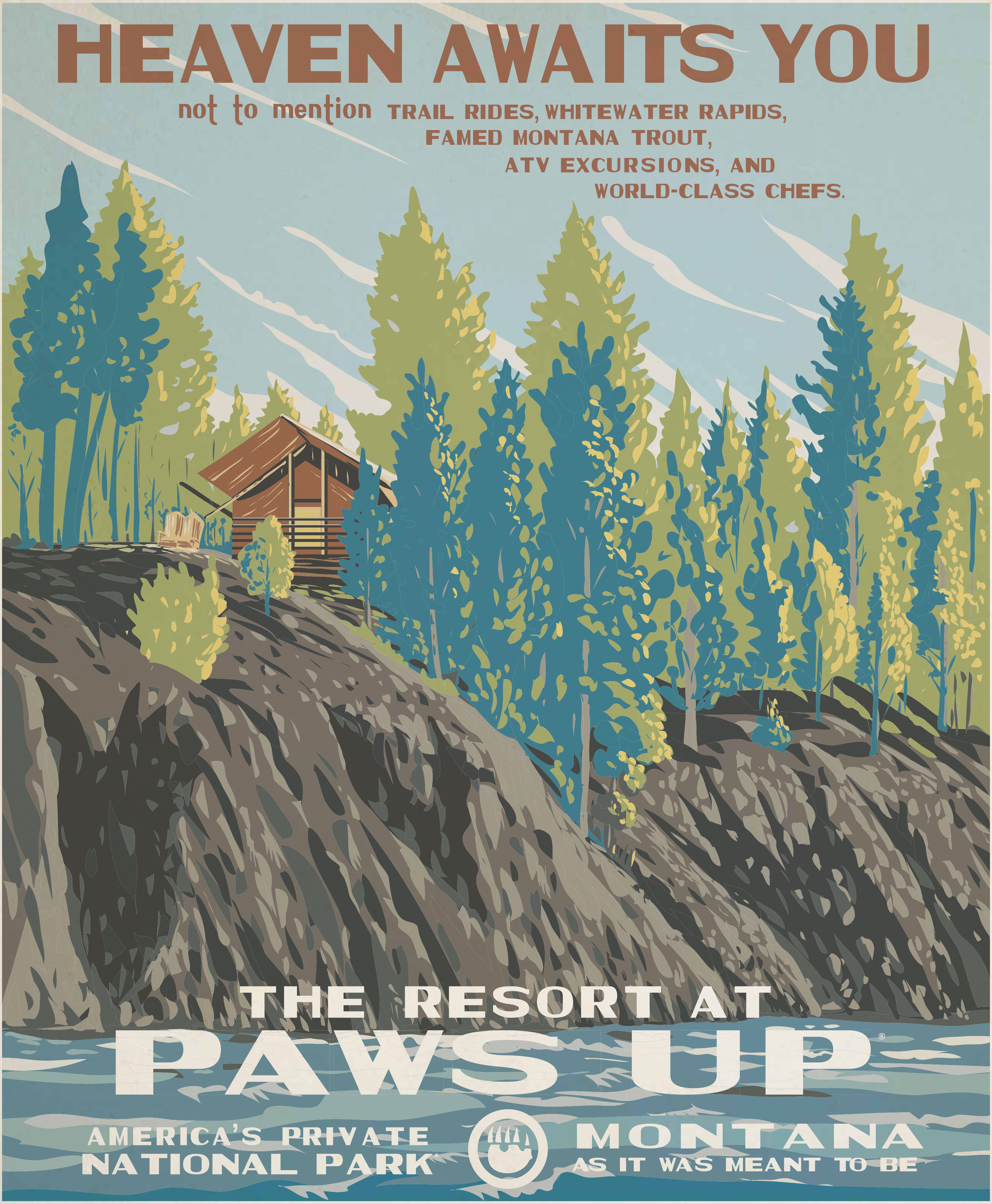

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Editor's Letter

Welcome to an issue where we've done something new, combining two of my favorite subjects: travel and design. While they may seem uncommon bedfellows, they're joined by more than separates them. Done well, both can take you out of the moment and transport you somewhere entirely different (figuratively, and also literally). At their best, they offer a new way of seeing, changing how you look at something, sometimes forever—whether that's a dinner under the stars on a secluded beach that sparks romance or the first time you set eyes on the lines of a Bugatti 57SC Atlantic Coupe and realize that not everything modern is necessarily an improvement upon what came before.

A recent book, *Awe: The New Science of Everyday Wonder and How It Can Transform Your Life,* examines our relationship to that intangible, often overwhelming, emotion we're filled with when witnessing something extraordinary or beyond our comprehension. In our Field Notes column on page 90, writer James Stewart notes that, according to author Dacher Keltner, "awe silences our narcissistic egos. It makes us look beyond ourselves to ask big questions about existence and the universe, maybe to seek answers, whether spiritual or scientific."

Travel can do that. And, I'd argue, so too can design. One story that combines the two is our feature on the luxury trains that ensure the journey is as memorable as the destination (p. 138). The beauty of rail travel is that speed is not the goal: There will always be quicker ways of getting from A to B. What we're looking at here are experiences that will stay with you. By offering a five-star hotel suite on wheels, designed to evoke the glamour and sophistication of a bygone era, be that Art Deco or Belle Epoque, train companies such as Belmond and Accor have tapped into the mood of the moment, bringing a sense of celebration to your passage between some of Europe's most elegant cities.

Indeed, luxury tourism is booming. Elite travel operators tell us of demands from clients wanting to go further and deeper, immersing themselves in unique adventures. The usual high-end but predictable destinations no longer suffice. Which is why, in these pages, you can read about a 17-day expedition to the North Pole, now offered by a ship that combines all the indulgences imaginable with ice-breaking robustness—"It's the poster child of future tech," enthuses Michael Verdon, our marine and aviation editor, who was on board one of the first voyages.

And there's Mozambique's sprawling Gorongosa National Park, which encompasses more than 1,500 square miles at the bottom of the Great Rift Valley. It was largely devastated by the 16-year-long civil war that killed a million people and destroyed so much of the wildlife population—but it has now been reborn as a magical safari destination thanks to $100 million from a deep-pocketed benefactor who fell in love with the country nearly 20 years ago. Read our exclusive interview with him on page 112.

One of the most intriguing design trends to emerge in real estate over the past few years is the rise of the branded residence. Admittedly the first was way back in 1927, so we're not claiming to have uncovered a phenomenon here. But what's certain is that the appetite for plug-and-play turnkey homes is surging, up 150 percent in the past decade by some estimates, and as the pandemic has waned, the thought of buying into an aesthetic delivered by your favorite fashion or jewelry designer, car marque, or hotel chain seems to have struck a chord.

Why? Status, perhaps. These properties are viewed as a "trophy purchase" by many. Investment, quite probably. They provide, theoretically at least, an assurance of quality and discernment. They also offer a playground where every possible amenity can be found under one roof. And when purchased as a second, or third, residence, as is often the case, they allow for a personal immersion into a different and rarefied realm—a design vacation, if you will. Perhaps that's the best of both worlds.

Enjoy the issue.

Paul Croughton
Editor in Chief
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THE GOODS

THIS MONTH'S WHO, WHAT AND WEAR

L

Laura Catena, fourth-generation vintner and managing director of Catena Zapata Winery in Mendoza, Argentina, was always opposed to the idea of a winery restaurant—largely because she couldn't devote the time needed to make it the best in the region. That all changed when her head winemaker, Alejandro Vigil—who, along with his wife, María Sance, owns Mendoza's top restaurant, Casa Vigil—made an offer.

"We were starting construction on a new vermouth distillery and hospitality center, and he proposed the idea of adding a restaurant that he would manage," Catena says. "I agreed on one condition: that he would make wine the star of the dining experience." Vigil loved the idea, and Angélica Cocina Maestra, the world's inaugural wine-first restaurant, was born.

While the name honors Angélica Zapata, Catena's grandmother, everything else is a tribute to wine. Place settings in the intimate glass-walled dining room overlooking the vineyards are composed of an elegant arrangement of Riedel Vinum stems, setting the stage for 10 wine courses, each paired with a dish. Sommeliers, not servers, tend to the table as the menu reveals Mendoza's terroir, glass by glass and plate by plate, through the wine and the cuisine's locally sourced ingredients.

Catena promises a rotating selection of

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: **A view of La Pirámide vineyard from Angélica Cocina Maestra; chocolate-smoked Dulche de Leche; Catena Zapata Chardonnay paired with handmade ravioli.**

wine flights and pairing menus based on seasonality, but to start, the two wine-menu offerings are the Angélica, a traditional pairing experience, and the Rollercoaster, an unorthodox offering that switches back and forth between white and red wines.

Both flights are accompanied by a meal of purely Andean influences. Everything on the menu comes from regional farms and producers, much of it from the winery's own gardens. Small culinary details, such as the trio of infused salts harvested from Catena's Andean salt mine or the pea-flour-ravioli dish crafted from hand-ground peas cultivated on site, lend complexity and verve to each pairing. The fresh trout gravlax, served with fennel in three textures, is a bold match for the winery's Tinto Histórico blend of Malbec and Petit Verdot, while Catena's beguiling Vino Natural Ancestral Moscatel sets the stage for a finale of cheese and confitures.

Catena is quick to point out that this is not a meat-centric menu like so many other Argentine restaurants—and also that she's now full of ideas for the restaurant she never wanted. "My ears are gigantically open," she says. "Alejandro is the same way—we love bouncing ideas around. Anything is possible, just as long as we make it the best." **Katie Kelly Bell**

. . . And a Sandwich to Fly For

The menu's fascinating sandwich course, Picnic Elena, pays homage to Catena's mother, who loves making elaborate picnic sandwiches. Since bread is the soul of any sandwich, this one features a variety known as pan de campo ("camp bread"), an Argentine country loaf prepared in mud ovens in the morning, often served with jam for breakfast or slathered with olive tapenade in the afternoon.

Vigil updated the recipe, traditionally composed of flour and the special lard that makes Argentine empanada dough so delicate and flaky, with a blend of beef tallow and pork lard, as well as changed the bread's shape. Vigil's lard imparts a distinct flavor because it's rendered from pancetta cured for 24 hours in a brine laced with juniper, bay leaf, and a mix of peppers. It's that unique taste that elevates the humble pan de campo and reinvents a sandwich as a refined dish served with sliced beef, a colorful selection of tomatoes, and three sauces.

"You'll find yourself making this elaborate sandwich on this amazing bread in a beautiful place looking at vineyards," Catena says, "just like the picnics my mother loves." **K.K.B.**

The master blending team behind Stags Leap District Winegrowers 2021 Cabernet Sauvignon.

A One-of-a-Kind Collectible Cabernet

STAGS LEAP DISTRICT, a small American Viticultural Area (AVA) on the east side of Napa Valley, skyrocketed to fame in 1976 when Stag's Leap Wine Cellars 1973 Cabernet Sauvignon took first place among red wines at the Judgment of Paris, beating out, among others, Château Mouton Rothschild 1970 and Château Haut-Brion from the same vintage. Fifty years after the production of the wine that would bring renown to this small AVA—and put Napa Valley on the map—the 16 wineries of Stags Leap District Winegrowers Association are releasing a limited-edition 2021 Cabernet Sauvignon, the first collaboration among its members.

Originally planted in the area in 1961, Cabernet Sauvignon accounts today for more than 80 percent of the grapes grown on Stags Leap's 1,200 acres. With a winemaking history dating back to the late 19th century, the district is said be named for a nimble stag who frisked across its rugged peaks, giving local hunters the slip. The animal and the region's wineries are memorialized on the new release's label art. "The 16-point-buck label design features the included 16 wineries and evokes the simultaneous power and grace found in our Cabernets," says Nancy Bialek, executive director of the winegrowers association. Each winery aged Cabernet Sauvignon in new French-oak barrels for one year before they were submitted to a group of five winemakers for selection, blending, and further aging, with only four barrels produced as a final wine.

That master blending team was composed of Michael Baldacci of Baldacci Family Vineyards, Robbie Meyer from Malk Family Vineyards, Robert Smith of Quixote Winery, Elizabeth Vianna from Chimney Rock Winery, and Pine Ridge Vineyards' Josh Widaman, all of whom were chosen by their colleagues. Both Stags' Leap Winery and Stag's Leap Wine Cellars took part in the project, as did familiar names such as Clos du Val, Cliff Lede, Silverado, and Shafer vineyards, among others.

Of course, that level of participation posed a risk: If too many cooks spoil the broth, just imagine the effect of too many winemakers. But Vianna, from Chimney Rock Winery, says it was "a remarkably smooth and delightful process to put the blend together as a team. Not only are we working neighbors, but we've all known each other for many years as friends, so it was a fun opportunity to just hang out, bring each of our different perspectives to the table, and work with some extraordinary juice to craft this one-of-a-kind creation."

"At this level of wine quality, power and richness are a prerequisite, and these were the types of lots that were provided as samples from our member wineries," says Pine Ridge's Widaman. "It became evident very early on in the blending process that the most important thing for us to focus on as a team was the tension that exists between the juicy vibrancy of fruit and the concentrated yet polished tannin profile that are both hallmarks of this district."

A pre-release sample of Stags Leap District Winegrowers 2021 Cabernet Sauvignon offers a heady bouquet of blueberry jam, blackberry, graphite, and purple flowers. It is soft at first, with polished tannins, moderate acidity, and flavors of black cherry, cassis, dark chocolate, orange zest, and violet; a pleasant floral note persists into the smooth finish.

Priced at $275 per bottle, with three- and six-packs available, pre-offer took place at the Stags Leap District Winegrowers annual Vineyard to Vintner event at the end of April. Starting October 15, it can be purchased exclusively on the district's website, with sales ending December 14. **Mike DeSimone and Jeff Jenssen**

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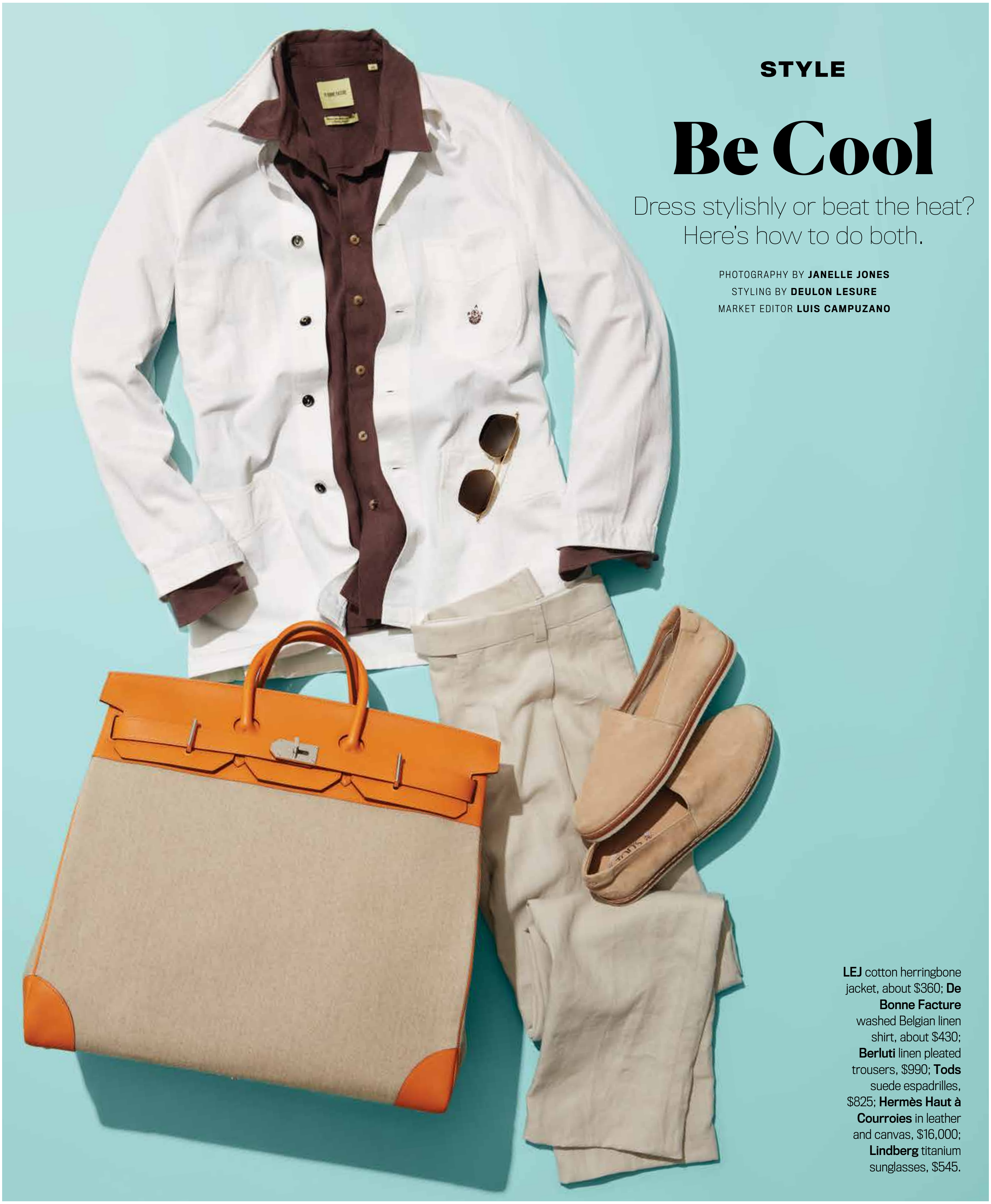
STYLE

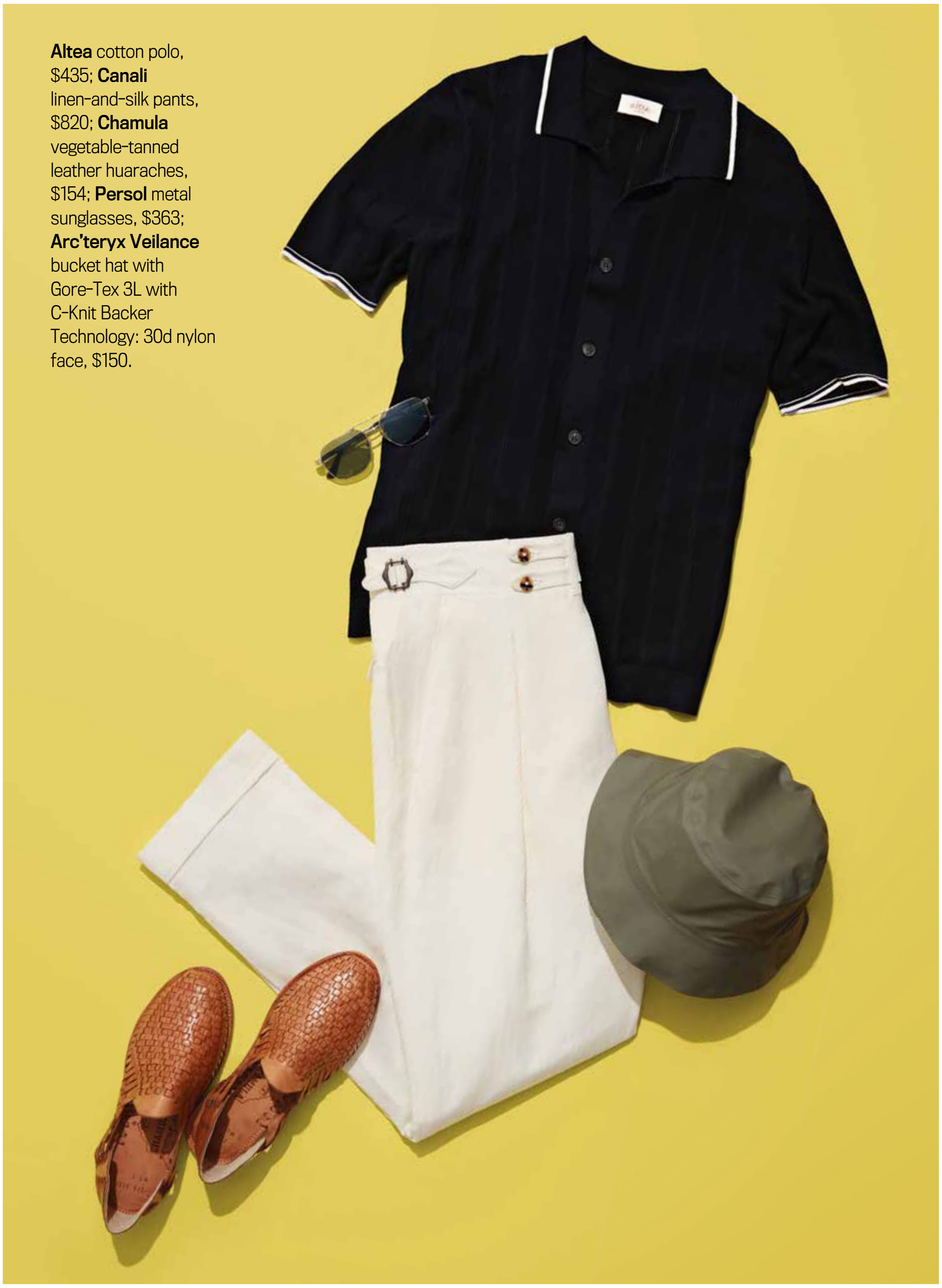
Be Cool

Dress stylishly or beat the heat? Here's how to do both.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY **JANELLE JONES**
STYLING BY **DEULON LESURE**
MARKET EDITOR **LUIS CAMPUZANO**



LEJ cotton herringbone jacket, about $360; **De Bonne Facture** washed Belgian linen shirt, about $430; **Berluti** linen pleated trousers, $990; **Tods** suede espadrilles, $825; **Hermès Haut à Courroies** in leather and canvas, $16,000; **Lindberg** titanium sunglasses, $545.



Altea cotton polo, $435; **Canali** linen-and-silk pants, $820; **Chamula** vegetable-tanned leather huaraches, $154; **Persol** metal sunglasses, $363; **Arc'teryx Veilance** bucket hat with Gore-Tex 3L with C-Knit Backer Technology: 30d nylon face, $150.

Summer pulls a man to the extremes of the sartorial spectrum in short order: a tuxedo for a black-tie wedding one day, a pair of swim trunks and some espadrilles the next. But at least those situations come with an easy-to-follow blueprint. It's the open-ended occasions between the two—vacation dinner outings, backyard get-togethers, a heatwave commute—that present the greatest challenges to warm-weather dressing. The trick is finding items that deliver more structure and polish than tees and shorts but don't cause you to keel over from heatstroke.

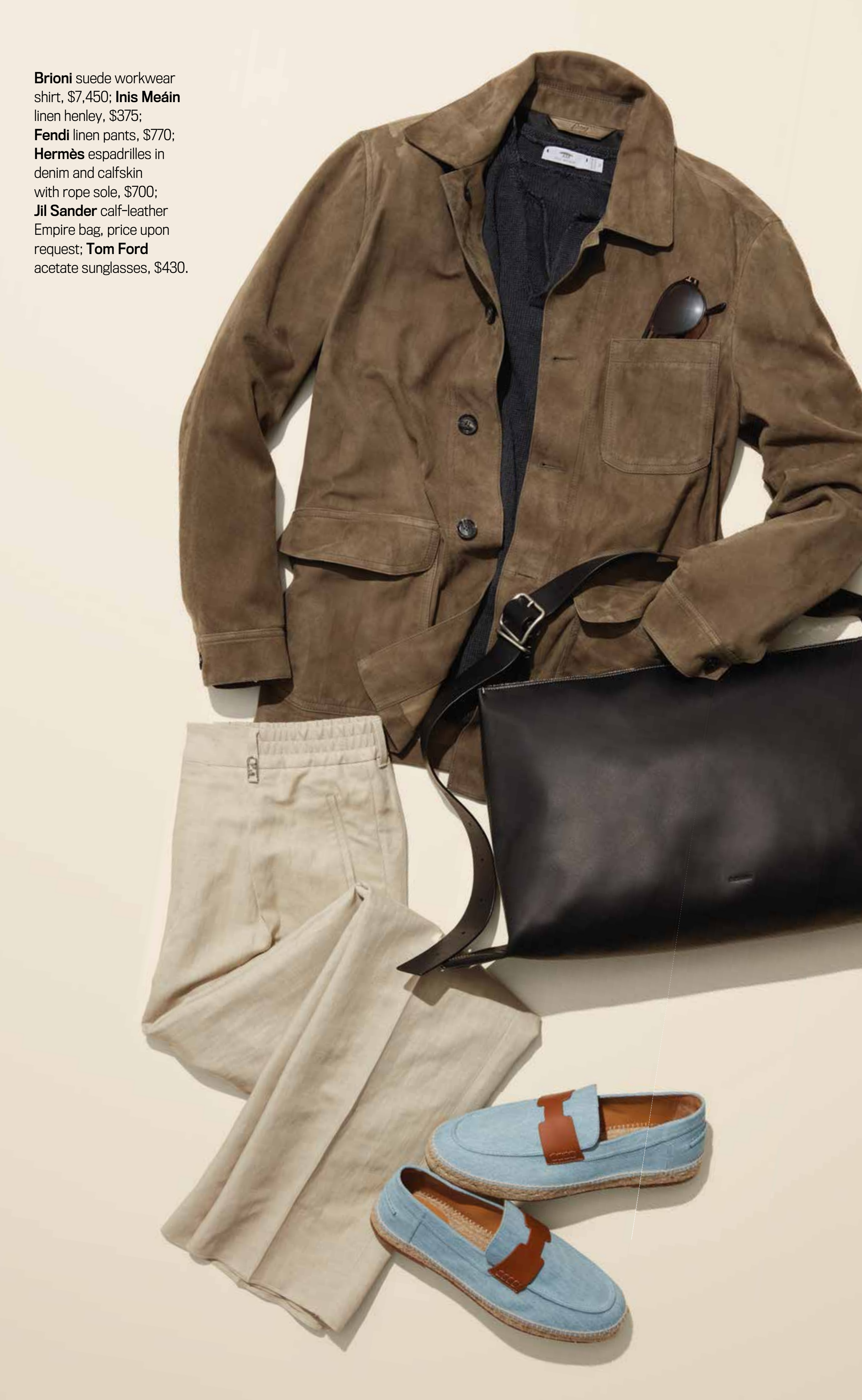
Fortunately, today's menswear market, after years of increasing informality (spurred first by athleisure, then by the pandemic), is now flush with refined, just-shy-of-tailored options to address the predicament. This isn't a case of some technological breakthrough in air-conditioned-polyester suiting but rather a return to the forms, fibers, and silhouettes men wore in sweltering heat during the most stylish parts of the 20th century. Think lightweight knit polos, open-weave shirts, and pleated, free-flowing trousers reminiscent of those worn by Fred Astaire in *The Band Wagon*—or from 1980s Ralph Lauren ads.

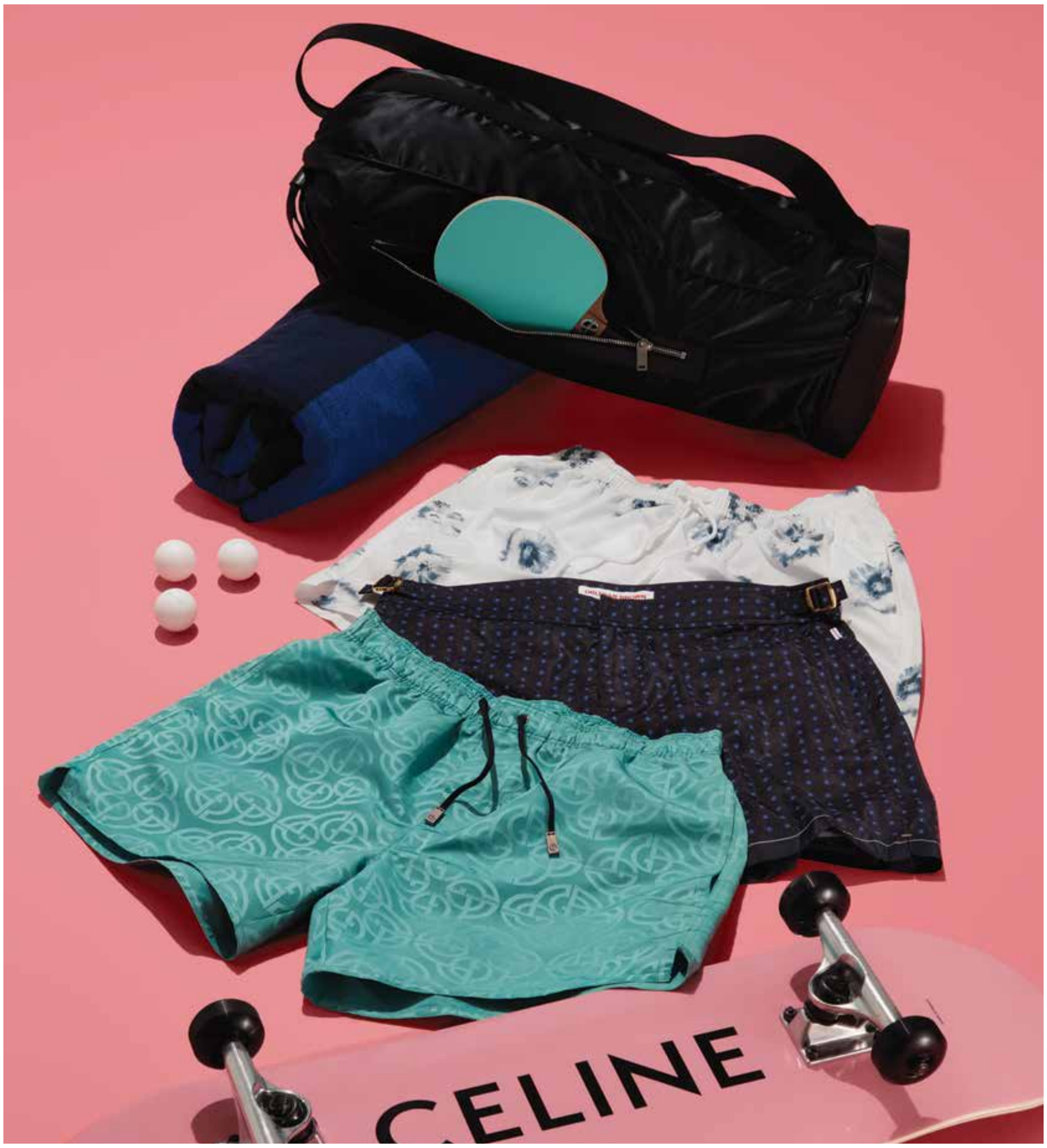
Few do this contemporary take on elegant summer styling better than Stòffa. The New York–based outfitter crafts everything from suits to shorts in muted tones and natural fabrications—features that are paramount to these kinds of breezy wares. "T-shirts are a very young invention. Band-collar shirts with half buttons have existed in hot tropical climates for centuries," says designer Agyesh Madan of the brand's inspiration, which draws from both Eastern and Western cultures. For spring-summer 2023, the label offers easy upgrades such as breathable basketweave cotton trousers and linen shirts in sun-evading hues, including wheat, taupe, and seafoam. A large part of the collection is constructed from silk-blended or tropical wool, which Madan calls "a very underrated fabric in the summer." Though at first lightweight wool may seem like an unlikely choice, Madan says it was commonplace in summer suiting 60 years ago, as it can be made nearly sheer and is more resilient than cotton.

Stòffa and its stylistic contemporaries, including P. Johnson, Giuliva Heritage, Doppiaa, and Drake's, plus more globally recognized houses such as Brunello Cucinelli and Loro Piana, also render heat-beating comfort via looser silhouettes. "You don't find tight clothing in tropical climates," Madan notes, the simple fact being that items with more room to breathe, breathe better. "If there's air between the layers on your body, you'll be able to cool down—you need that air separation," says Greg Lellouche of No Man Walks Alone, a New York City haberdashery that has become a cult favorite for its stock of imported under-the-radar imprints. In addition to avoiding the uncomfortable experience that arises when slim fit meets sweat, more-relaxed garments feel less stuffy—literally and metaphorically—and thus less formal. While summer shirts are often collared and trousers may feature crisp creases, a looser fit allows them to drape, rumple, and move freely, whether worn on stagnant city streets or sunbaked boardwalks.

To be clear, improving your summer closet doesn't mean reverting to the tired sartorial decrees of yesteryear, particularly the commandment that "men shalt not wear shorts." Nor do tees need to be written off, though Lellouche notes that a knitted style—for example, one by Camo, a burgeoning label based in Biella, Italy—hits the mark better than your average screen-printed cotton-jersey number. In both cases, though, "it's about what surrounds them," he says. And if you do go the shorts route, be sure to apply the same principles that apply to their legged counterparts, particularly as they pertain to fit and fabrication—and consider what goes up top. "Shorts have to be supported by the right shirt, because of their inherently casual nature," Lellouche advises. "Then swap out your flip-flops and sneakers for a more elevated shoe."

And since there are only so many hours one can reasonably spend strolling the beach barefoot, the proper footwear for this "refined casual" aesthetic is the requisite finishing touch. Whether you're kicking a lingering flip-flop habit or curbing a canvas-sneaker appetite, elegant


Brioni suede workwear shirt, $7,450; **Inis Meáin** linen henley, $375; **Fendi** linen pants, $770; **Hermès** espadrilles in denim and calfskin with rope sole, $700; **Jil Sander** calf-leather Empire bag, price upon request; **Tom Ford** acetate sunglasses, $430.



Saint Laurent Long Sling Bag Econyl regenerated nylon, $1,450; **Tiffany & Co.** Everyday Objects leather-and-walnut table tennis paddles, set of two, $720; **Tekla** cotton towel, $140; **Eleventy** polyester quick-drying swim trunks, $295; **Orlebar Brown** polyester swim trunks, $375; **Giorgio Armani** nylon-and-polyester swim trunks, $525; **Celine Homme by Hedi Slimane** wooden skateboard, $990.

options abound, from leather mules by Todd Snyder x Armando Cabral to Chamula's hand-woven huaraches. Last summer, No Man Walks Alone debuted a Moroccan-raffia moccasin in collaboration with El Karti, an artisan based in the coastal town of Essaouira, which it still stocks. Effectively, it's a traditional woven-upper shoe that the retailer revised with a stacked heel and a leather lining for a more loafer-like feel.

"The objective was to take that look and material but apply it to everyday summer looks in the city," Lellouche says. In fact, the more he describes them, the more they sound like a remedy for any number of summer-style setbacks—a shoe that works at both ends of the season's occasion dressing *and* everywhere in between. "You could even wear them to a summer black-tie event and they wouldn't look out of place," he says. Same goes for pairing them with swim trunks—and what other style of footwear can pull off that trick?

Jake Woolf

TRAVEL

Make Breakfast, Not War

London's Old War Office has been transformed into the city's most spectacular new hotel.

When architect Geoff Hull first stepped onto this old government office site on London's Whitehall eight years ago, he found it in a hazardous state. He stumbled on everything from waterlogged basement flooring to air-conditioning ducts artlessly rigged down the center of corridors, an ad hoc solution that had defaulted to permanent. The stringent historic protectionism he was tasked to work within, known in the U.K. as listing, had seemingly not been applied by the government to its own Old War Office (OWO), a landmarked Edwardian-era building commissioned in 1898 and, famously, Winston Churchill's office during WWII. "I could see the grandeur, the importance, but it was disappointing—shocking, even—what the government had done to the building," says Hull, a director at EPR Architects. Nonetheless, he says, "it was one of those tingling moments."

Now, that career-capping challenge is about to be unveiled: the new Raffles London at The OWO. This hotel-and-residence project repurposes a 580,000-square-foot building, completed in 1906, that was a triumph of Imperial-era Britain; as the nerve center of the empire, the Old War Office was intended as a bombastic statement of grandeur that cost the equivalent of $225 million to construct. Six years and more than $1.2 billion later, it is reclaiming its place as a new kind of London landmark: the latest, most luxurious hotel.

The Old War Office was a top-secret government building—both MI5 and MI6 were established here in 1909, and employees used a discreet entrance on Whitehall Court still known as the Spies Entrance—and as such it has had cameos in several Bond movies. "The original purpose was keeping people out, and now we want people to come in," Hull says, laughing about the particular challenge of making the fortress-like site feel welcoming. He and his team responded by opening up more entrances, turning the once-gated quadrangle into alfresco social space, and festooning the facade with flags to help indicate it's open for business. The assortment of nine restaurants installed, including a trio overseen by three-Michelin-starred Argentinian chef Mauro Colagreco, as well as the first Guerlain-branded spa in London, should help lure locals, too.

Hull's restoration unearthed lost mosaic floors beneath cheap carpets and elaborate cornice-work blocked by dropped ceilings. Replicas were cast of the carved ceiling-work to help replace damaged or lost portions, the soaring central marble staircase at the heart of the lobby was painstakingly repaired, and the cramped, damp basement underwent a massive five-story excavation and extension.

Half of the site has been repurposed as 85 branded residences, while the hotel portion consists of 120 Thierry Despont–designed rooms and suites. The standouts are the sequence of five Heritage suites, each of which was once a stateroom; these can be booked separately or converted into one enormous annex spanning almost 5,400 square feet.

The Granville Suite is a particular favorite of managing director Philippe Lebeouf. "The room has incredible paneling and is 30 feet high with an incredible bathroom—it's so big, but there was nothing we could do to make it smaller. This is a listed building, so we could make no structural changes." Lebeouf notes that it's named after Christine Granville, one of Britain's most effective agents during World War II. "She was Churchill's favorite spy," he says. "During the war, the building was occupied by ladies, because all the men were away at war." Doubtless, James Bond would approve. **Mark Ellwood**

TOP: **The OWO, as seen in London's Whitehall, and in various Bond films.** BELOW: **The Lord Haldand Suite, which was Churchill's office during WWII.**

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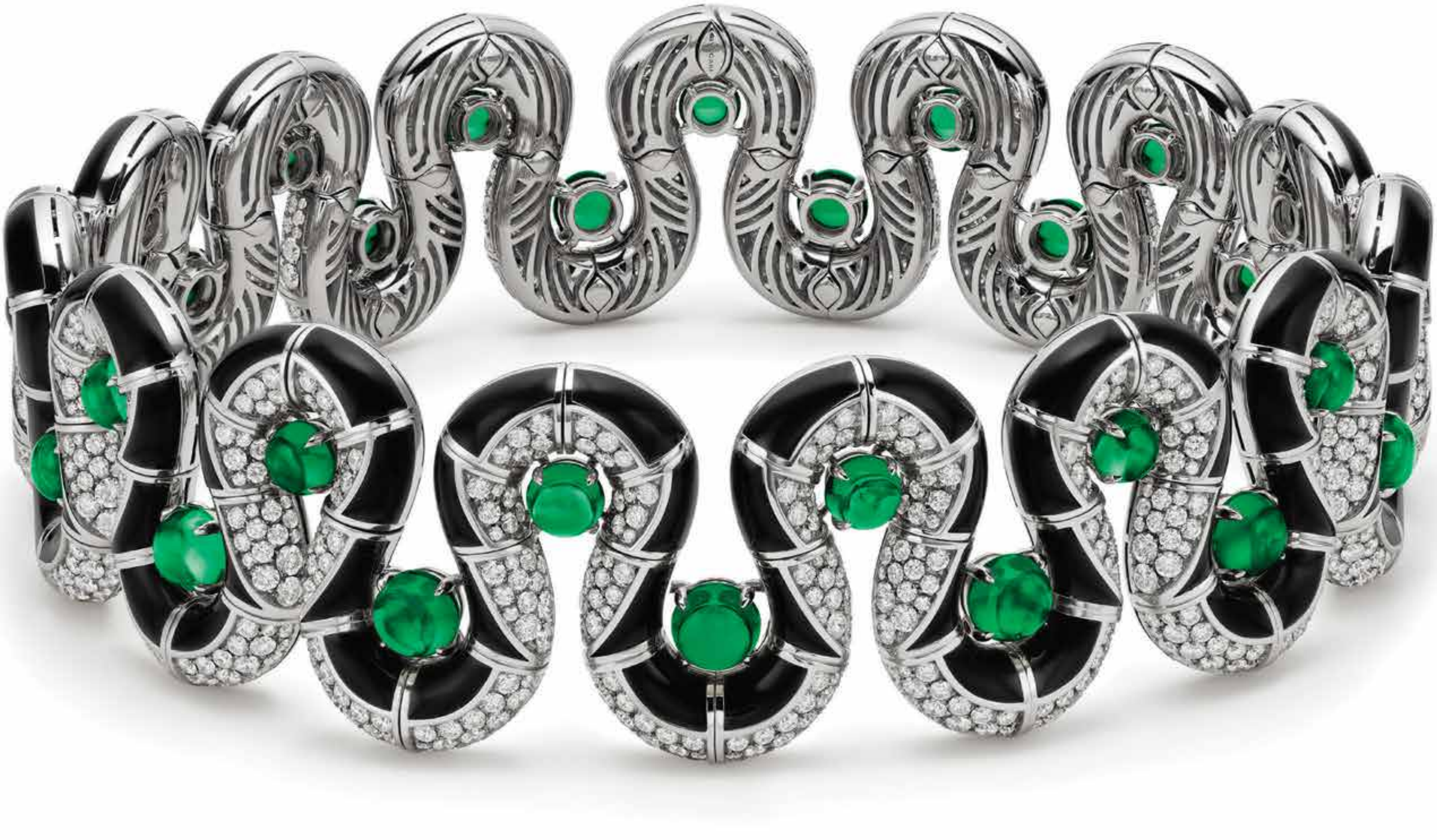


WATCHES & JEWELRY

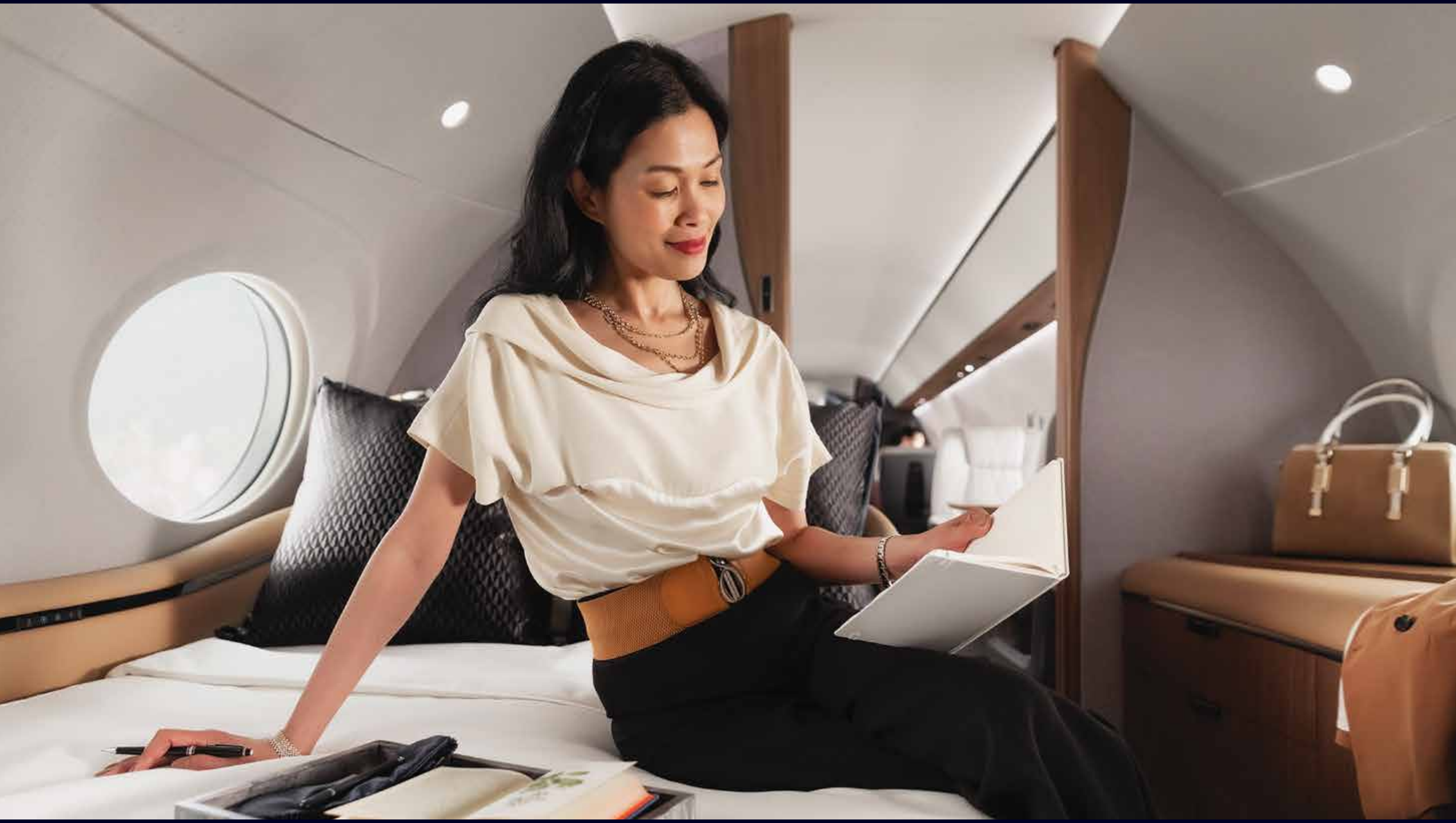
New Temptation

Bulgari boldly reimagines its legendary Serpenti design for the line's big anniversary.

Bulgari is shedding its skin—again. To celebrate 75 years of its most seductive design, the Roman jeweler has managed to put a new twist on its most recognizable motif. This platinum-set diamond, onyx, and cabochon-emerald choker presents a bird's-eye view of a snake's figure as it slithers around the neck.

Typically, a Serpenti design forms a loop, with the animal's head meeting its tail below the wearer's collarbone. This piece embodies a thoroughly modern and less literal presentation—no small feat when you consider the design has been continuously in vogue since the mid-20th century. But in fact, the new look is, at least in concept, closest to its earliest predecessor. The first Serpenti debuted in 1948 as a square-faced wristwatch with a coiled band; it wasn't until the '50s that a more literal expression, with a case shaped like a snake's head, slid into Bulgari's creative lexicon.

The design's perennial allure continues to attract repeat and aspirational clients alike. And while only a single buyer will get to own this one-of-one creation, others can at least enjoy Bulgari's Serpenti Factory, a concept exhibition that will feature five inventive art installations by five different artists—all inspired, naturally, by the iconic design—when it opens in New York City next month. **Paige Reddinger**



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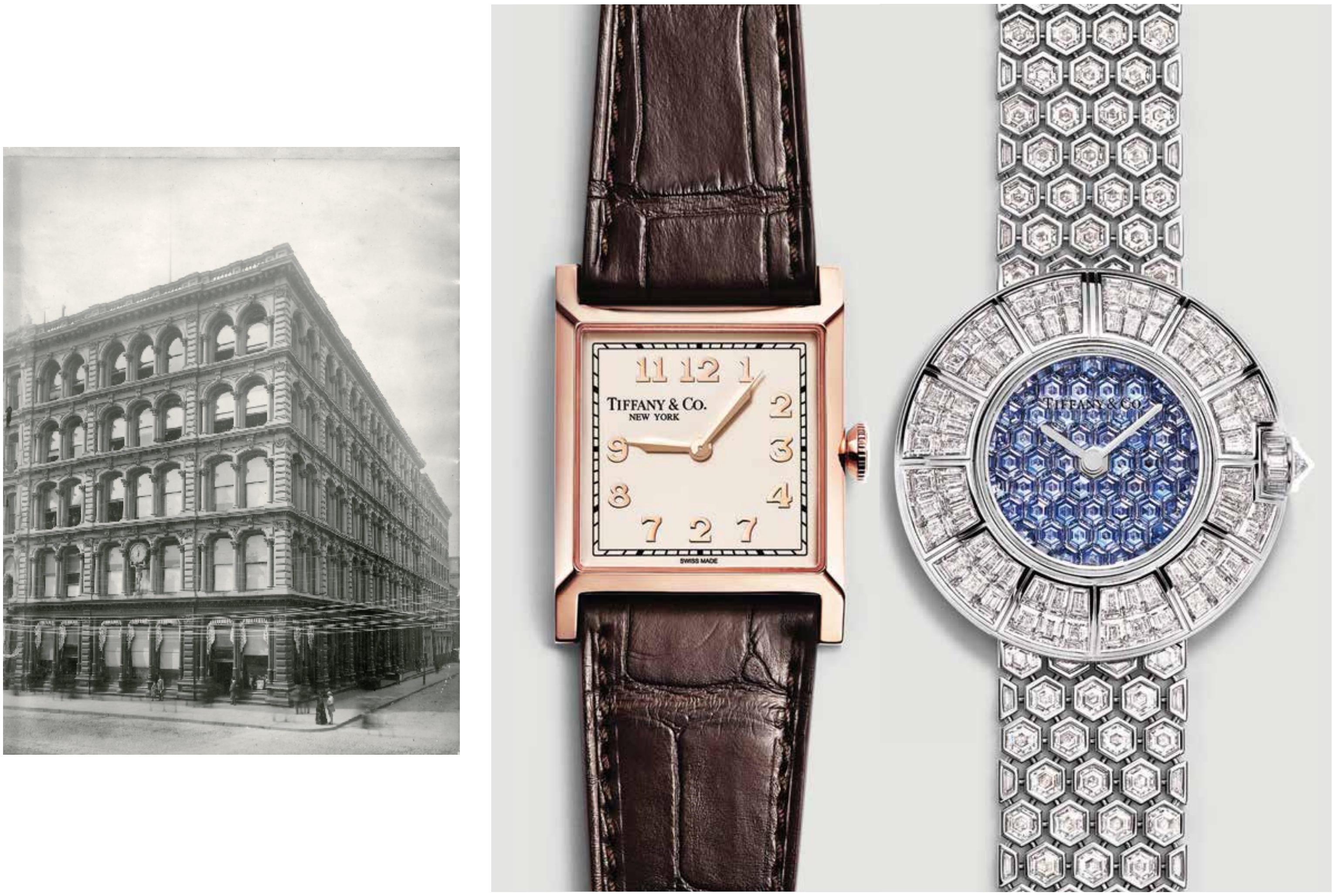

TOP, LEFT TO RIGHT: **Tiffany & Co.'s earlier location, in New York's Union Square; the Union Square watch in rose gold, and a one-of-one white-gold watch with diamonds and blue sapphires.**

Tiffany's, Out of the Box

IN CASE YOU haven't heard, 186-year-old Tiffany & Co. just got a major face-lift. Flush with funding from its new owner, luxury conglomerate LVMH, the storied American jeweler revealed a sprawling renovation of its iconic Fifth Avenue flagship late last month—the first head-to-toe overhaul in the location's 83-year-long existence. A series of exclusive products were created to celebrate the Peter Marino–designed store, including a quartet of one-of-a-kind and limited-edition watches that can be purchased only at the revamped location, now dubbed the Landmark.

Also receiving a dramatic refresh is the company's watch lineup in the form of a pair of models called Tiffany & Co. Union Square Limited Editions, a nod to the company's early location, in the late 1800s, in the Lower Manhattan neighborhood. The new boutique models come with a dial that features the Tiffany & Co. logo situated askew at 10 o'clock, versus the traditional placement beneath the 12 o'clock marker. And alluding to the historic building's 727 Fifth Avenue address, the 5 o'clock and 6 o'clock markers are removed to make room instead for "727," which lines the bottom of the dial.

There are two iterations: a straightforward version with a rose-gold case and a cream-colored dial on a brown alligator-leather strap for $10,000 (pictured), and, for $35,000, one decked in pavé diamonds on the dial and rose-gold case with both black and Tiffany Blue alligator-leather strap options. Both are limited to just 100 pieces each and come with a color printing of the new store under their sapphire-crystal casebacks.

It wouldn't be a true Tiffany & Co. moment, however, without one-of-a-kind, price-upon-request, diamonds-everywhere high-jewelry pieces. These are inspired by a different Manhattan monument, Washington Square, and while the location has no historical ties to the brand, it managed to inspire a thoroughly modern design. The 12 hour sectors take their cues from the park's fountain while the diamond bracelet mimics the hexagonal-shaped pavement. There are just two in the world on offer: one with a blue-sapphire dial (pictured) and one with white diamonds.

But if you can't get your hands on one of these tribute timepieces, make do with seeing Tiffany's spruced-up digs, which span over 100,000 square feet, including a three-story glass addition where you'll find other exclusive gems from high-jewelry pieces to home *objets* to eyewear. Plus, swing by to check out the new setting of the legendary 128.54-carat Tiffany Diamond, previously worn by Beyoncé. **P.R.**

Arturo Fuente

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ART

The Visionary

Celebrating the genius of Richard Avedon, a century after his birth.

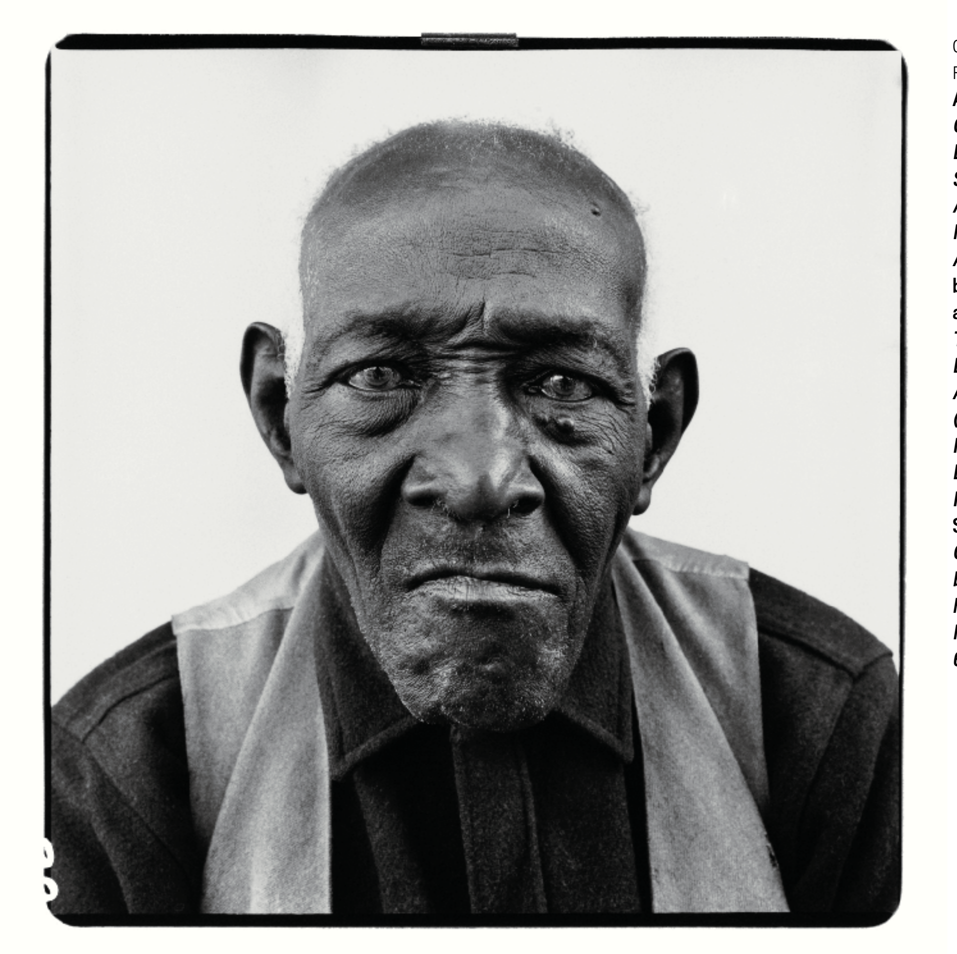
THE RICHARD AVEDON FOUNDATION/COURTESY GAGOSIAN

Some artists are so influential that their contributions are at risk of being taken for granted. Picasso comes to mind, as do Warhol, Rauschenberg, and Johns. In the realm of photography, Richard Avedon fits the bill. From embracing movement and the outdoors in fashion shoots (a practical solution to being without studio space in Paris) to staging portraits in front of stark white backdrops, his aesthetic choices have become ubiquitous among generations of followers.

This year marks the 100th anniversary of Avedon's birth, and he's being treated to quite the party. The festivities kicked off in January with the opening of a Metropolitan Museum of Art exhibition of his monumental murals, stretching up to 35 feet wide, which will be on view through October 1. This month, Gagosian is mounting *Avedon 100,* featuring 150 works by the photographer, at its West 21st Street gallery in New York. To curate the show, the gallery invited creatives—artists, models, actors, designers, scholars, former Avedon staffers, and such—to each choose a favorite image from his prolific oeuvre. And on May 1 and 2, several iconic Avedon images will be among the highlights at the first in a series of Sotheby's auctions of the Pilara Family Foundation's acclaimed Pier 24 collection.

The initial concept at Gagosian was to designate 100 selectors, one for each year of his centenary. "The enthusiasm was so great once we started asking people, we soon realized we were going to have more than 100 [yeses]," says senior director Kara Vander Weg. "We thought, why not?"

An accompanying book offers participants' thoughts on their choices, from artist Jenny Saville's take on a close-up of Warhol's gunshot-scarred torso to Hillary Clinton's reminiscence of Avedon's suggestion that she swap her trademark suit jacket for his own cozy sweater. The breadth of selections mirrors Avedon's reach: *Dovima with elephants,* arguably the most famous



COUNTERCLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: **Richard Avedon, *William Casby, Algiers, Louisiana, Born in Slavery, 3.24.63*, and *Andy Warhol, Artist, New York City, August 20, 1969*, both at Gagosian and Sotheby's; *The Beatles, London, England, August 11, 1967 (Paul McCartney, Ringo Starr, John Lennon, and George Harrison)*, at Sotheby's.** OPPOSITE: ***China Machado, suit by Ben Zuckerman, hair by Kenneth, New York, November 6, 1958.***

fashion photograph ever, is there, as are portraits of Audrey Hepburn and other movie stars, socialites, and athletes, but so are works from Avedon's critically celebrated "In the American West" project and his lesser-known 1940s "New York Life" series, including *#8*, of an adorable little boy charging up some Harlem steps—Vander Weg's pick. "He embodies the beautiful spirit of a New Yorker," she tells *Robb Report*. "He looks tiny and ferocious to me, and I love that."

A few images will appear at both Gagosian and Sotheby's, including a stirring 1963 portrait of the lined and weathered William Casby, who at the time was the last living American born enslaved. Avedon was known for standing beside, not behind, the camera in order to create intimacy with his subjects. "The tight crop focuses on Casby's face, where you can see all the details," says Emily Bierman, Sotheby's global head of photographs. "His eyes are piercing, looking into your soul, really." Or, at least, into Avedon's. **Julie Belcove** ●

> **"The tight crop focuses on Casby's face, where you can see all the details. His eyes are piercing, looking into your soul, really."**

THE ANSWERS

with…

Gabriel Hendifar

The artistic director of Apparatus didn't intend to start an influential and widely admired interior-design practice when he began creating his own lighting in 2010. At the time, the now 41-year-old Los Angeles native says, "it was about making things to live with."

After studying costume and scenic design at UCLA, Hendifar spent 10 years creating women's wear and taking occasional interiors projects on the side. That combination might explain why the products he has penned for Apparatus—which he cofounded in 2012—have proven popular with stars such as Joseph Altuzarra, Rose Byrne, and Liev Schreiber, whose homes have all been illuminated by his fixtures. Along the way, he has also established outposts in L.A. and N.Y.C., and this month he'll open a London showroom.

But whether his products are installed in Nolita or Notting Hill, Hendifar's starting point never wavers. "What I hope to achieve all the time is . . . an object where you feel that there is some sense of human connection," he says. "I'm always trying to associate meaning with the objects I surround myself with." *JUSTIN FENNER*

What's the first thing you do when you wake up?

I make myself an espresso, and then I try to look out the window at the sky. I find that looking out of the window makes me feel like I have opened myself for the day.

What apps do you use the most?

It's the camera app, without question. I'm obsessed with recording things so I remember them, but I try not to do it in a way that takes me out of feeling present in the moment. But obviously Instagram, like everyone else, and Caviar for ordering dinner.[1]

What do you do that's still analog?

I sketch on paper. I've tried to digitize that process, but it's not something that's native to me, so I'm still sketching on the back of a napkin or a piece of paper.

What's something you've recently done for the first time?

I had a rendezvous with a lover in a foreign city. I was actually meant to be in London, and I had the thought that I would really like to experience a magical weekend in Paris. And when else am I going to have the opportunity to be there with a native Frenchman?

How do you find calm?

Calm for me is about being able to shift my perspective and zoom out. Those things often come most gracefully when I'm spending time by myself.

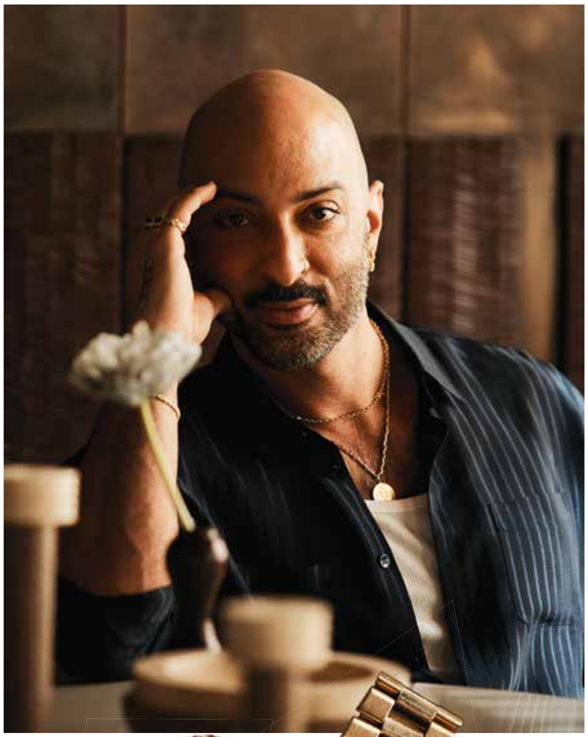
What do you crave most at the end of the day?

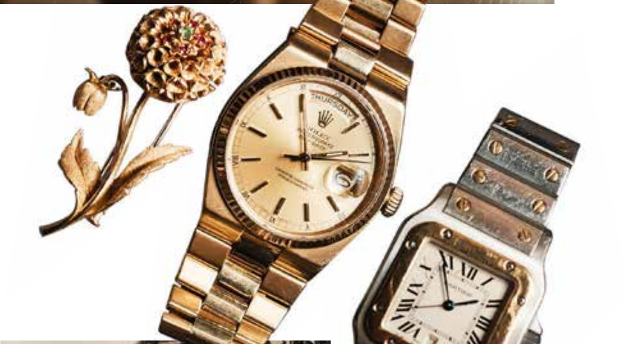
It's [being alone]. It's that time for reflection. And that's not to say that I don't love spending time with people and having dinner and all those things. But even after that, I do crave a moment, before I go to sleep, where I can reconnect with myself. ➤

[1] Caviar, a food-delivery app, connects diners to higher-end local eateries. In N.Y.C., it even has a section of Michelin-rated restaurants, including Pastis, L'Artusi, and Nougatine at Jean-Georges.

Hendifar in Apparatus's New York gallery. The evolving space has been redesigned three times since the company moved here in 2016.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY **WESTON WELLS**





FROM TOP: **Hendifar in his office; a floral brooch with the designer's new Rolex Day-Date and Cartier Santos; a Polaroid of his late grandmother, Shazdeh; Apparatus's Standby incense burner diffusing a scent by Cinnamon Projects.**

What's your favorite cocktail?

I don't have a taste for alcohol, but I do smoke. So my version of a cocktail is I roll my own joints, which are a combination of geranium and rooibos with, like, a tiny bit of cannabis.

What's the most recent thing you've added to your collection?

A really beautiful little floral brooch. I believe it's a dahlia. And it's 1960s, French, kind of in the style of Schlumberger.[2] I got it on that trip to Paris, and I've been wearing it almost every day since.

Who is your dealer, and what do they source for you?

My therapist is my dealer. I'm kind of hooked on emotional interrogation and on being able to seek and integrate self-awareness and knowledge. It's my favorite hour of the week.

What's your workout routine, and how often do you do it?

I lift pretty regularly—four times a week, sometimes three, sometimes five. I've been with my trainer for four years, and for me it's kind of a design project: learning what my limitations are and learning about the capabilities I'd like to develop.

How much do you trust your gut instinct?

I trust it completely. The older I get, the more I understand that it's my intuition that has led me to all of the tiny little choices that I've made along the way to get me to this place, and I'm really fucking happy to be where I am.

If you could learn a new skill, what would it be?

I would love to tap-dance. I just think it's so cool.

Where do you get your clothes?

I love a trip to Prada. I love a trip to the Row. Those are kind of my go-tos. I was a big fan of Barneys when it was here.

Drive or be driven?

If I'm in the city, I prefer to be driven. Anywhere else—on holiday, driving through Ibiza, driving through Italy—definitely drive.

What car are you most attached to?

The first car that I drove was a Mercedes 300E from 1983, which I inherited from a cousin. I adore Mercedes of that generation.

Are you wearing a watch? How many are in your collection?

I only have two watches. I just recently purchased this gold Rolex Day-Date. I wore and still wear a two-tone Cartier Santos, which is my favorite watch, because my grandfather had one.

What's your favorite hotel in the world?

I mean, I have to say, Hotel Costes [in Paris][3] is fucking magical. I don't know that there's any experience like it.

What's worth paying for?

Expertise. Without question.

What's the last movie you paid to see?

I saw *Everything Everywhere All at Once* in the theater, and I cried through the second half of that film.

What was your last box set or Netflix binge?

The original *Dynasty*. It's this kind of ridiculous fantasy that is so frivolous and kind of feels really queer to me. I can kind of just imagine the writers' room being like, "Oh, my God—watch this. This is what she's going to say next."

What sort of music makes you happy?

When I'm dancing, it's disco, house, something with a vocal. But I am completely obsessed with Yuja Wang, and I recently got to see her perform the Rachmaninoff Piano Concerto No. 2. It was an absolutely life-changing experience. ●

---

[2] French jewelry designer Jean Schlumberger, known for his work with Tiffany & Co., was renowned for his ability to create surreal depictions of the natural world using gold, diamonds, and gems.

[3] Though Hotel Costes has an enviable position between the Place Vendôme and the Jardin des Tuileries, its interiors–designed by Jacques Garcia–are its main draw and blend old and new to mesmerizing effect.

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DOMAIN
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Rock On

These five outdoor chairs let you sway in style from urban rooftops to poolside patios.

▲

Low-back Post and Rung, Dawson Moore

Dawson Moore is very much about showcasing materials. The celebration starts early, as the craftsman sources his wood from his own property—a sixth-generation tree farm in Harbor Springs, Mich.—and the surrounding area. Call his method log-to-chair, if you will. Moore carves, bends, and joins each component by hand using simple tools that keep him closely connected to the wood. Each work of art is made to order. To ensure your Low-back Post and Rung rocker can fully withstand the outdoors, specify it in red oak with a paracord seat. *$4,800*

▼

Charme, Roberti

The crisscross netting back of Roberti's Charme rocking armchair provides comfy support without blocking breezes. The weather-resistant cording, called Flat Trendyrope by the northeast-Italian company, which got its start in wicker, comes in a fashion-forward sage-y green and an easy-to-live-with taupe; the frame is powder-coated steel and the runners iroko wood. Designed by Antonio De Marco, the nest-like piece adds a playful presence in a compact footprint perfect for urban patios or contemporary poolsides. *$3,995*

▲

Peacock, Cane-line

The fan-shaped back and woven wicker-like construction of Cane-line's Peacock rocking chair takes cues from the iconic wicker throne that reigned in the mid-20th century, albeit in a measurably less flamboyant manner. This pared-down Peacock—conceived in collaboration with Danish furniture designer Foersom & Hiort-Lorenzen—is also quite cozy, as it's made from Cane-line's Soft Rope, a durable, fade-resistant, and, yes, soft polypropylene. The rockers themselves are crafted from responsibly harvested teak. For extra comfort, top your Peacock with quick-dry cushions; the radial pattern of the vertically channel-tufted seat back recalls the chair's avian namesake. *$3,930*

▲

Hashi, Gervasoni

Italian designer Federica Biasi drew from Japanese traditions in devising the Hashi rocker. Although *hashi* means "chopsticks" in Japanese, the chair is not particularly leggy. The rounded, dowel-like components that comprise the iroko structure feel almost Shaker in origin, as does the waterproof woven-fabric seat. Gervasoni describes the lightweight technical fabric as a jacquard; it also emits tatami vibes. Biasi herself notes she is swayed by Asian and Nordic lines. No matter—at the end of a day on the patio, the simple, strong, timeless design speaks for itself. *From $2,837*

▲

Palmera, Pavilion

Kevin Stark, Lauren Stark, and Phillip Scott, the trio behind Stark Scott Studio, studied Caribbean hammock making as a precursor to developing the Palmera, an outdoor rocking chair from the Miami-based contemporary-outdoor-furniture company Pavilion. While inspired by the embrace of a hammock and the lines of a palm frond, the Palmera is more a wire-frame sculpture than a flimsy piece of fabric. Twenty-seven curved powder-coated steel rods are welded in 138 places to form the rocker's frame. That said, topped with a cushion, the breezy piece, available in 13 neutral colors, feels like a hug. *From $2,550* **Marni Elyse Katz**

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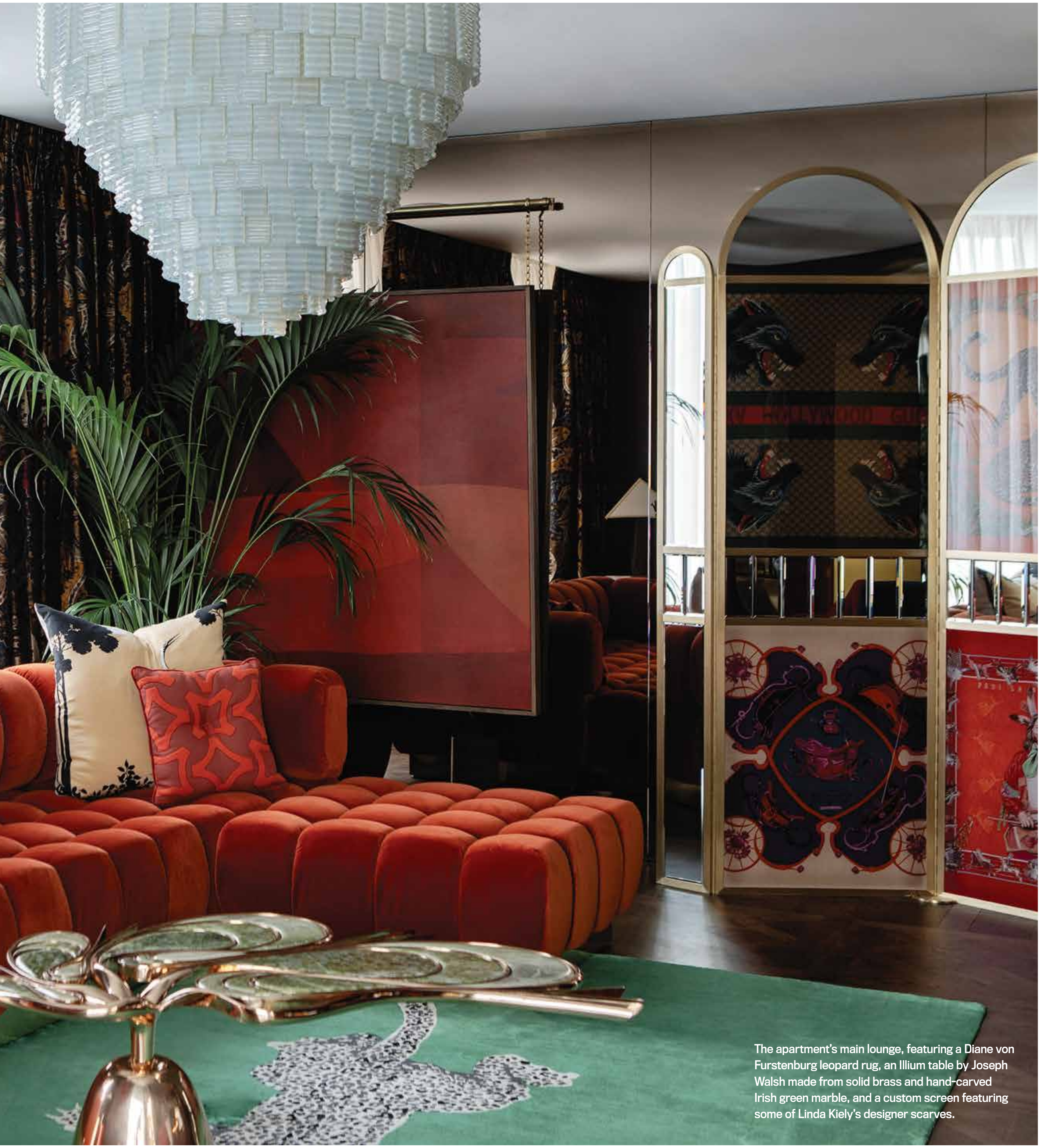
Daring in Dublin

An Irish designer explains how she created a glitzy second home in the capital, centered around entertaining, for a successful tech couple.

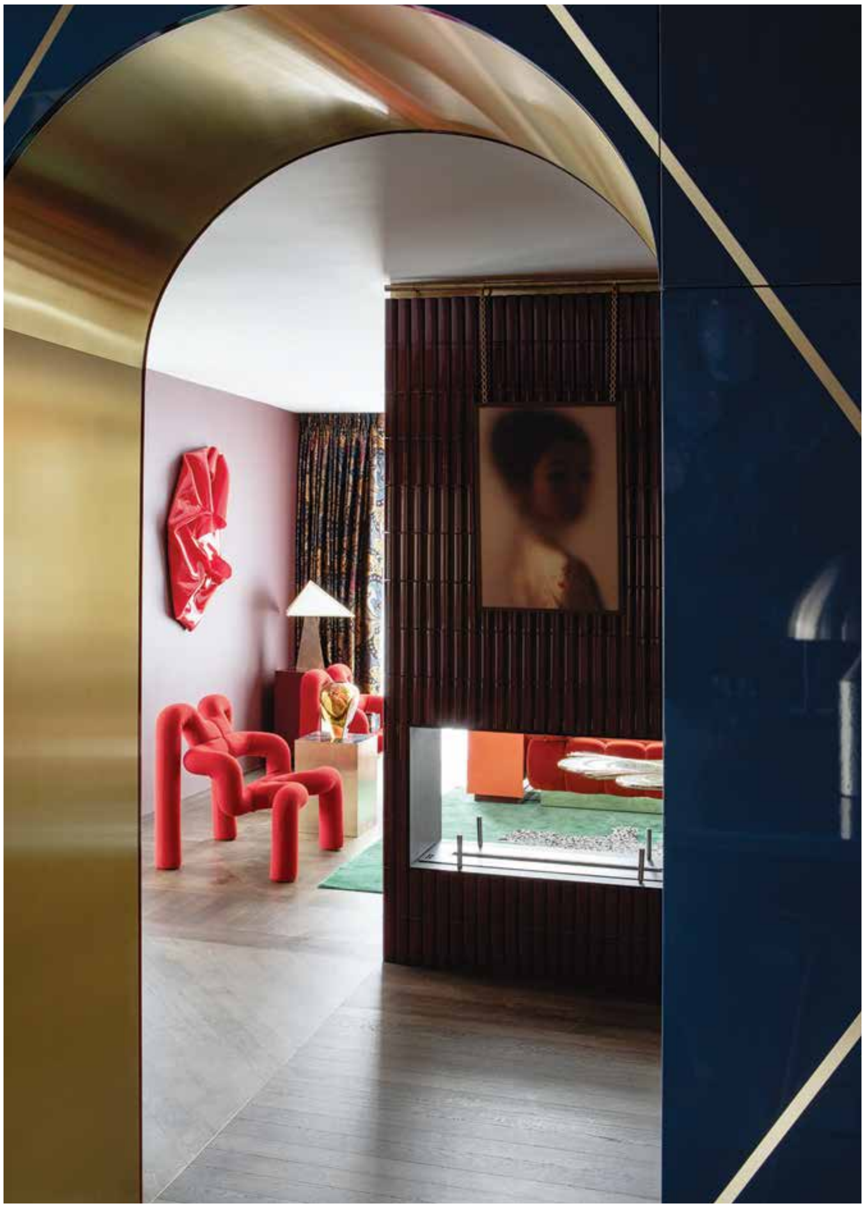
"It was so fun," says Roisin Lafferty, creative director of Kingston Lafferty, of designing the Dublin project her studio colorfully named the Kaleidoscope. The opulent city-center apartment, renovated for the very social Irish technology pioneers Dan and Linda Kiely, turned out to be a sexy mash-up of 1920s glam, 1970s luxe, and a heavy dose of Verner Panton whimsy. The result: a look that more closely resembles a private members' club than your standard, run-of-the-mill flat.

"It was kind of like designing a playground for adults," says Lafferty of the couple's second home, which is meant to be more of a party pad than a residence. "They're pretty successful



The apartment's main lounge, featuring a Diane von Furstenburg leopard rug, an Illium table by Joseph Walsh made from solid brass and hand-carved Irish green marble, and a custom screen featuring some of Linda Kiely's designer scarves.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY **RUTH MARIA**



LEFT: **A view of the lounge from the kitchen. The brass-and-marble plinth, from KLD, features custom artwork by Anya Pesce.** BELOW: **The kitchen, which does double duty as a luxe cocktail bar, has a vintage Italian chandelier and a blue-onyx island with an integrated ice bucket in solid brass.**

people [and] completely self-made. This was a celebration of their achievements and really just a chance for them to play," she adds.

The jet-setting duo, whose main home lies just outside the Irish capital, spend much of their time traveling to cities like New York, Paris, and Saint-Tropez, and have a strong penchant for fashion and art. They wanted this Dublin residence "to be like nothing anyone else had," says Lafferty. It needed to be a place where they could entertain when they were in the city, but it also had to reflect their innate joie de vivre and vibrant personalities.

Lafferty was able to draw inspiration from, of all things, Linda's wardrobe: Her exuberant collection of vintage designer suits and scarves served as the jumping-off point for the home's aesthetic, most distinctively in the living room. In fact, a few of her Gucci and Hermès scarves adorn the space, placed in between the glass panels of a custom-made room divider, framed on top by curved mirrors and trimmed with brass.

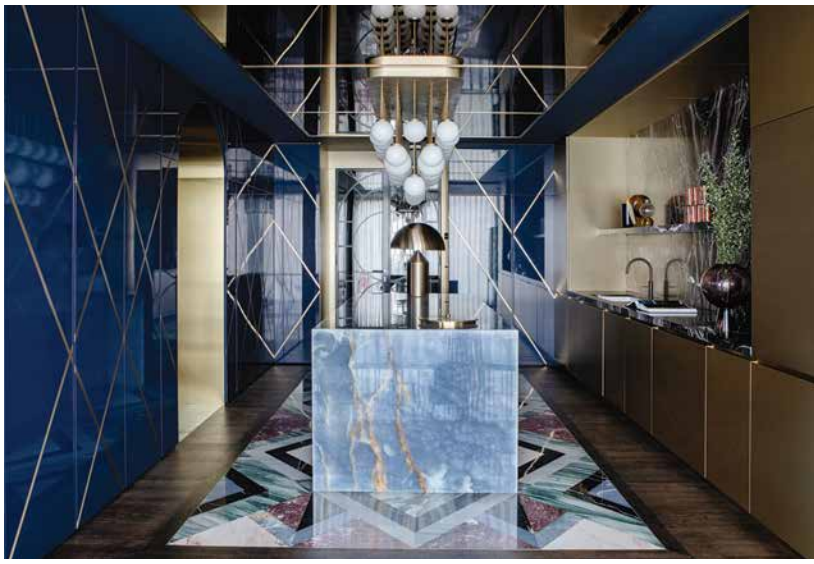
"If you look at how much is going on in one of those designer scarves, there tends to be such an abundance of pattern, shapes, color . . . [Linda's] really, really unafraid of color and pattern," says Lafferty.

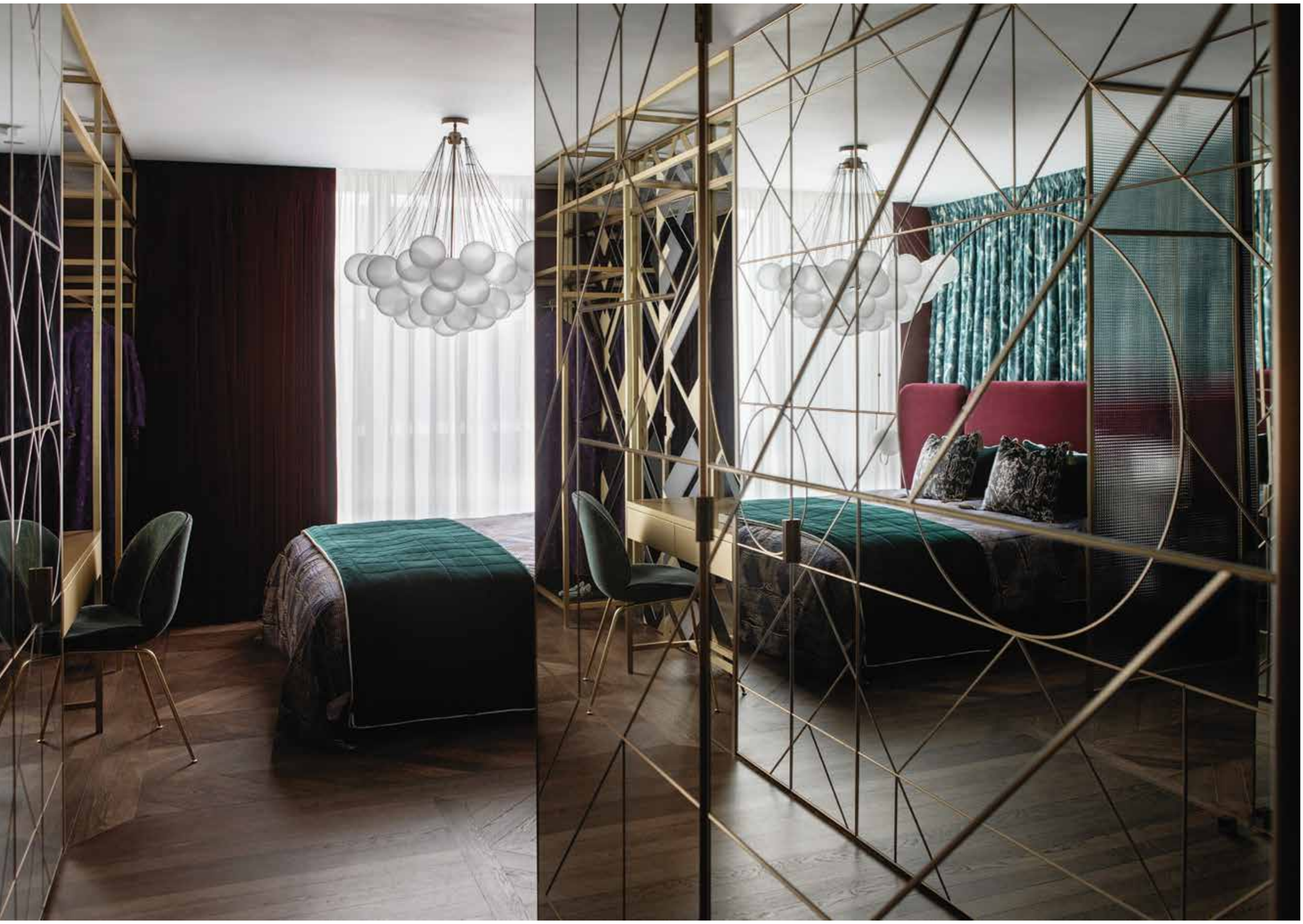
The embrace of bold hues and unabashed ornamentation plays out all over the apartment, which is located in Dublin's posh Ballsbridge district. In the living room, for instance, lacquered jewel tones are brazenly displayed: A two-sided wall separates the living room from a study area, and a plum-colored velvet button-back banquette anchors a bijoux nook. Kitchen walls have also received the lacquer treatment, this time in navy accented with brass threading. Heavily patterned window treatments contrast with modern statement furniture such as the living room's blood-orange velvet-tufted Todd Merrill sofa and the pair of squiggly Terje Ekstrøm armchairs wrapped in a rich red fabric. The pieces reflect the couple's appreciation for thoroughly contemporary—yet thoroughly comfy—design.

Color and texture also underscore the decor in the primary bedroom, albeit in much deeper hues. Here, green-and-white drapes adorn an entire wall on which a plush burgundy headboard rests, while even more velvet was deployed to cover the bedding, the furniture, and even the walls.

There is a palatable sensuality to the apartment's aesthetic. And this comes courtesy of not only its decorative elements but also its flow. The building is located in a relatively upscale section of the city but, according to Lafferty, the units themselves have a "very bland, very gray, generic kind of repeated fit-out . . . I think often apartment developments are considered in a bigger picture and maybe the thought does not translate to how people actually use it," Lafferty says.

In order to make the space feel truly livable, Lafferty and her team had to gut it and reimagine the interiors "to create a totally different experience." This turned out to be one of their biggest challenges. The building's rigorous renovation rules meant they had to apply "for a new fire certificate in order to get the layout that we wanted," Lafferty says. "We had to go above the [city] council to get that." It took them about six months. "No one wanted to accommodate our clients, so we





had to really, really push. That was a big challenge, but so worth it in the end."

Initially, the 1,646-square-foot two-bedroom home had several corridors and felt closed off by excess walls and doors. Lafferty reconfigured the walls and removed doors, leaving behind large porticoes; these established a logical ease of flow that allows one to drift from room to room while letting the sunshine in.

From the apartment's entrance, black-and-white striped-marble flooring leads the eye into the sunny kitchen through Art Deco–style glass double doors, inset with circles and brass bows, then on to the dining end of a glorious sunroom. On the other side is a lounge area that continues straight into the living room, followed by a substantial, brass-lined archway that returns to the kitchen.

In the kitchen itself, the razzle-dazzle of Hollywood Regency dominates. Natural light plays off a mirrored ceiling and glazed powder-blue-onyx island inlaid with gold-and-white veining—both of which glow thanks to triple-colored marble-inlaid floors framed by dark timber. The navy walls and brass cabinetry hardware add to the room's drama while doing double duty by hiding storage and bulky appliances; the overall effect is akin to lounging in a gentleman's club of yore.

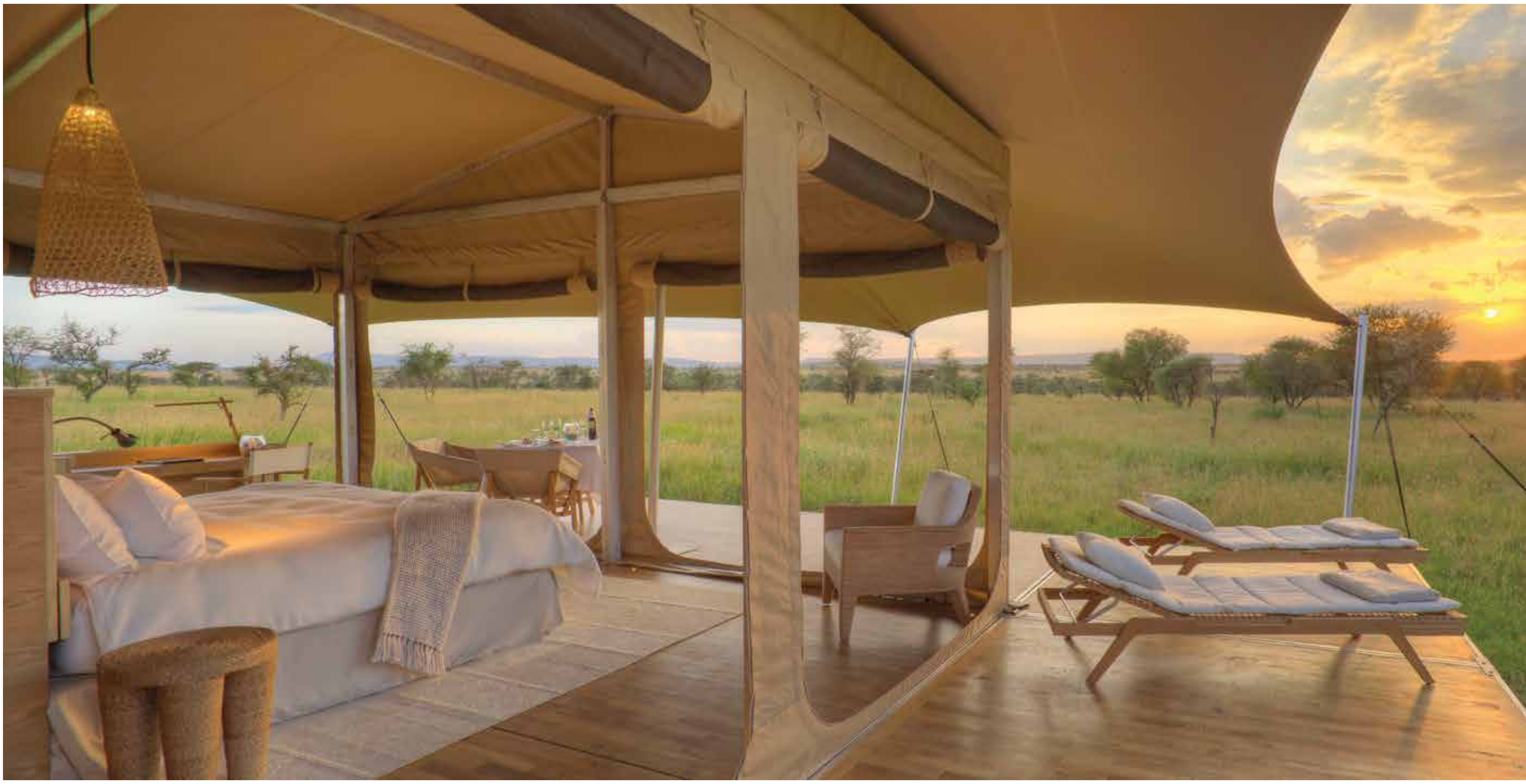
In the bedroom, the quotidian markers of home—such as drawers and shelving—are likewise tucked away. "There's a TV above the vanity there that's concealed within the mirror. So, again, just all of the kind of ugly functionality concealed as much as possible," Lafferty says.

ABOVE: **The primary bedroom is all about reflection: Secret wardrobe and bathroom doors are hidden behind some of the 500 pieces of mirror.**

Revealing the finished home to the Kielys for the first time was an event. "It was a full-sensory experience for them. We had Champagne chilling, their favorite scent sprays. We had their favorite playlists playing and gave them a tour. It was just magical," Lafferty says of the great reveal.

Since then, the couple's party pad has been christened by a handful of fetes, allowing Lafferty to gauge the reactions of guests seeing the home for the first time. "Some people walk in and are just a bit speechless. They kind of walk around, sit, then take it all in," she says. "There's so much detail, it takes a while to absorb. But everyone loves the atmosphere."

"It's a feast for the senses," she adds. "That's what we kind of wanted it to be."
Michelle Duncan



Remarkable Rover

Of all the astounding sights in Tanzania's Serengeti National Park, a luxury accommodation complete with white-glove service might be the most surprising.

THE RULE FOR spotting game in the bush is to look for what doesn't belong. In the shaggy green wild of the southern Serengeti, a flash of ivory snags the eye like silk on a nail. Could it be? Yes, it is—a rare sight among the fever trees and gnarled acacias: a hot tub.

It's set into an elevated, wraparound deck of Kenyan Meru oak in the shadow of a sprawling canvas sheet. There are lounge chairs and, around the corner, a small dining table with a bottle of Chenin Blanc perspiring in a silver bucket on starched white cloth. The en suite, when fully opened to the breeze, offers panoramic watercolor views from the king-sized bed and feels closer to being outside than in, notwithstanding the stocked bar, writing desk, walk-in shower, and Wi-Fi.

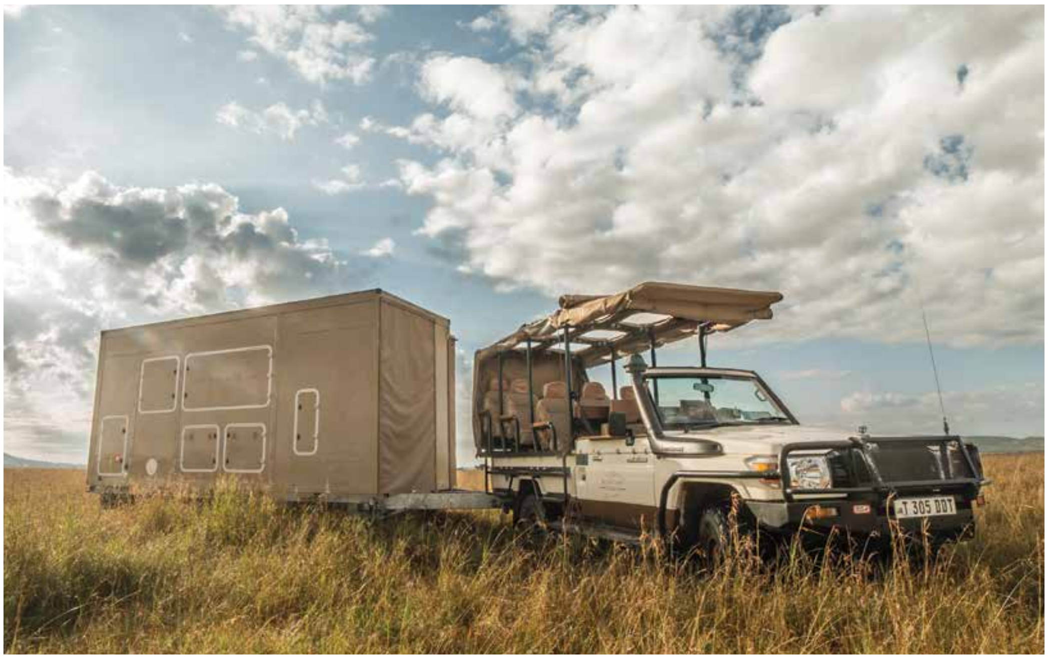
So far, so safari lodge. But instead of sitting perched on some hill nestled between an infinity pool and a gift shop, we're in the thick of Tanzania's Serengeti National Park, poised at the edge of the tall grass where elephants wander and cat eyes glow back at you in the dark. Our spacious and perpetually mood-lit accommodation, over 1,000 square feet of something between a safari tent and a luxe tiny home, is improbably, ingeniously mobile, a remarkable design that folds into itself—lock, stock, and bathtub—like a magician's trunk, becoming its own trailer that can be towed between campsites.

The Rover, from longtime Tanzania and Kenya operator Bushtops Safari Camps, is the brainchild of company founder Andrew Stuart, a fourth-generation safari pro who spent his youth indulging a passion for boats, working in shipyards and running maritime-tourism outfits off the coast of Mombasa, Kenya, where he still lives with his wife and Bushtops co-operator, Claudia. A marine engineer by trade, Stuart applied

various boat-building efficiencies—cleverly engineered storage, stowable furniture, advanced materials—to a packable dwelling that does an uncanny impression of the serenely luxuriant abodes at Bushtops' permanent camp in the northern Serengeti.

"Basically, it's a boat on wheels," Stuart says, noting that "the flush toilet, the water system, the pumping system" are all repurposed marine applications. Those gray slate walls in the shower? The stone is a mere two millimeters thick, bonded onto fiberglass to cut weight, like you'd find on a yacht.

The design process took over two years and was brought to life by Zurich-based architects Andrin Schweizer Company. Inside and out, everything hinges and snugs: The writing desk collapses, the shelving folds flat, and the bed frame stows away into its own headboard. The entire unit can be set up or disassembled in a day. One morning, we wake at sunrise to watch the whole operation pull stakes and head north, a caravan of Land Cruisers, each towing over five tons of hardwood, canvas, wicker, and stone neatly transmogrified into a large rectangular box. It's not something most guests ever see—Roving Bushtops relocates between the southern and central Serengeti twice a year, following the seasonal migratory patterns of the millions of animals that continuously trek back and forth across the savanna, and travelers typically book time in one area or the other—but it helps to fully appreciate the slow, pulverizing, mud-caked grind of an overland African migration, whether for zebra or Toyota. By evening, following an extended game drive with Bushtops' longtime head ranger, Deus Mitsetse, we slip into the tub of an identical Rover many miles north, part of a vanguard unit sent two days prior. Lit by an East African sunset, it's the same soak with a different view, lush southern grassland replaced with the kopjes and low scrub of the central Serengeti plains, a herd of gazelle ambling past in the distance.



CLOCKWISE FROM OPPOSITE: **The Rover in its natural habitat; the entire abode packs into a unit that's about the size of a 20-foot shipping container; meals and drinks—as well as everything else—are arranged through your personal butler.**

Camp, in either area, consists of eight Rovers—each solar-powered and using fresh water trucked in from the northern base's water hole, to avoid depleting local resources—plus a large mess tent with a bar, a lounge, a portable wine "cellar," and a dining room. Each Rover comes with personal butler service, and all guests enjoy a private truck for game drives, no matter how small the group. A Rover 2.0 is in the works: The sketches show a more modern color palette and an increased focus on textures, but within the same footprint—after all, the fundamental Rover design is bush-tested, and if Africa can't break it, only a fool would try to fix it.

The unseen updates, instead, are mostly concerned with weight savings and ease of assembly and packing. Currently, setting up a single Rover requires a team of six. By cutting mass and further simplifying the moving parts, Stuart says, the Rovers could be even more transportable, require a smaller crew to prepare, and range yet deeper into the wild without sacrificing an iota of luxury.

"We've never had any feedback from customers about wanting more in terms of amenities or the overall experience," he notes. "But if we could trim a few tons and make it able to be assembled by just a couple people, who knows? We could send individual Rovers on ahead into even more remote areas, along with mobile kitchens." And bubbles for the hot tub, naturally. **Josh Condon**

A Penthouse That's Truly Minted

YOU COULD ALMOST SMELL the money from across the street. Back in the early 1900s, this gritty corner of downtown San Francisco, just south of Market Street, was home to the famous Mint Building with its imposing Doric-columned facade. At the time, it was said to hold a third of the United States' gold reserves.

Today, Mint Plaza, running alongside the now-landmarked 150-year-old Mint, is a cool, pedestrian-only thoroughfare buzzing with outdoor cafés and food trucks and well-known for its signature movable orange chairs.

Look up and sprawling across the ninth floor of a former firehouse and Hale Brothers Department Store warehouse is the 6 Mint Plaza penthouse, a stunning 3,520-square-foot loft that just might define San Francisco urban living.

A discreet entry leads into this 1924 building that was completely reimagined by the city's historic-renovation specialists, Martin Building Company, in 2007.

ABOVE: **The sizable living room offers great open-plan entertaining opportunities.** BELOW: **Views of the city's skyline are a welcome backdrop throughout the space.**

Take the direct-access elevator up to the full-floor penthouse and you're greeted by a vast, open-plan living space, three bedrooms, three-and-a-half baths, and jaw-dropping views of the San Francisco skyline.

Here, many of the original features, such as the metal-frame windows and concrete walls, have been retained and juxtaposed with modern amenities, such as a professional-grade kitchen and spa-like bathrooms.

Standouts include a glassed-in 100-bottle wine "wall" by the front door with its smooth river-rock floor, a cavernous primary suite with a huge walk-in closet and private terrace, a full laundry room, and a balcony off the main living area. On the building's 10th-floor roof-deck, there's a well-equipped gym, a barbecue, and sun loungers. To the rear of the building, the penthouse claims a private two-car side-by-side garage.

"This is a unique property," says Alan Morcos, listing broker with Compass. "You're steps away from Market Street, Union Square, SFMOMA, Yerba Buena Gardens, and great shopping. The new, $1 billion 5M project is right across the street."

This is the first time the penthouse, listed for $4.5 million, has come on the market since the owners bought it in 2017.

And yes, as you'd expect, the property is in "mint" condition. **Howard Walker** ●

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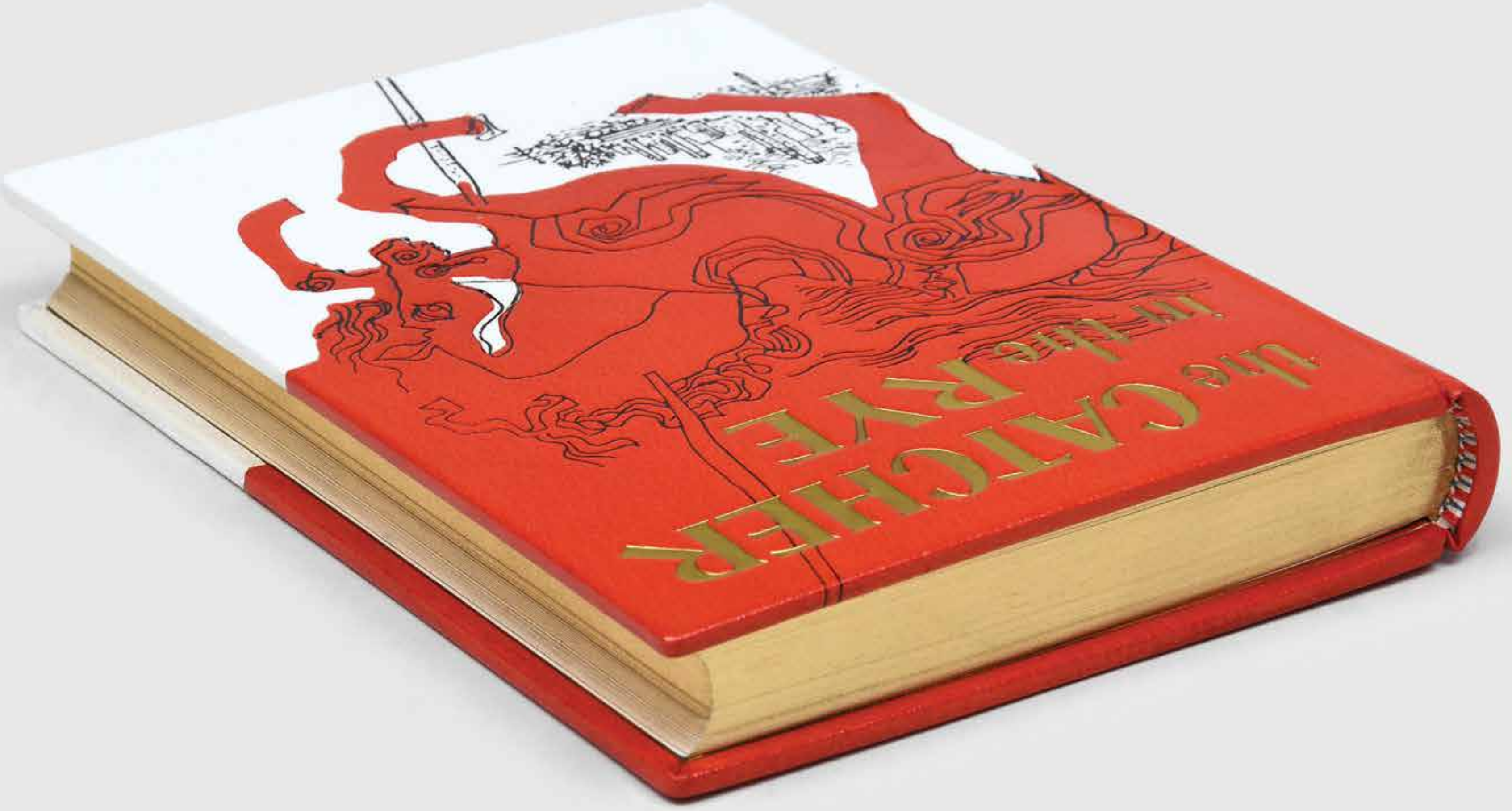


Bound for Glory

London's Chelsea Bindery resurrects rare books the old-fashioned way—by hand.

BY **ABIGAIL MONTANEZ**

FIRST PRINTINGS OF popular titles such as *To Kill a Mockingbird* or *The Old Man and the Sea* can fetch upwards of $100,000—but not if their covers are battered, their dust jackets missing, or their delicate pages detached. Although returning damaged classics to their original condition may be impossible, having them finely bound can save cherished copies from the dustbin.

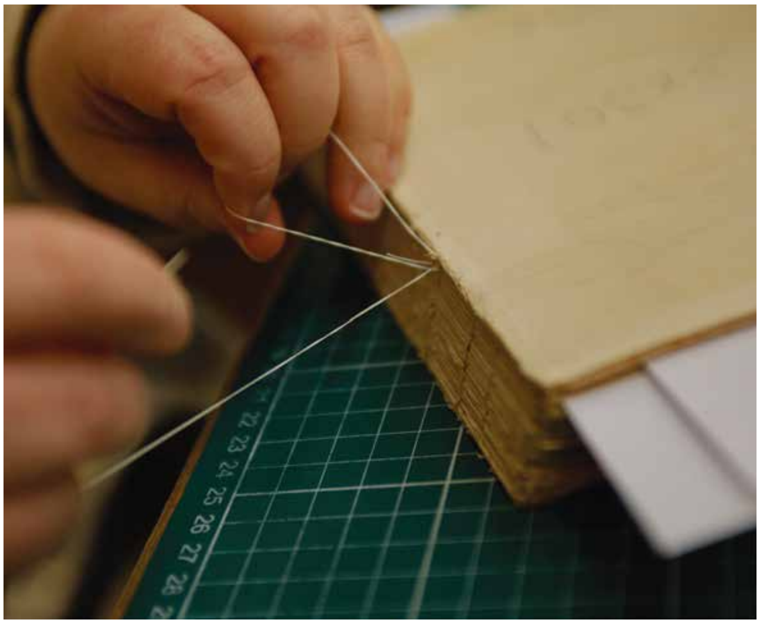
Unlike antiques such as furniture and decor, the worth of which can be greatly diminished by restoration, literary works can recoup some of their monetary value (and extend their longevity) if properly refurbished. Chelsea Bindery in Battersea, London, takes the endeavor one step further by transforming first editions into objects even more decorative than the originals. "A particularly artistic or lavish binding adds to the desirability of a book as a collectible and to the pleasure it brings," explains manager Emma Doyle.

A single book can take up to 12 weeks to bind, with prices starting at about $1,800, depending on the size and the intricacy of the design. In some cases, the workshop will remain faithful to the spirit of the old cover; other times, it will reimagine it completely. The rejuvenated volumes' fine leather bindings can incorporate 22-karat gold. Chelsea artisans have even encrusted a first edition of *Breakfast at Tiffany's* with real diamonds in the tiara.

The production process demands an exacting degree of meticulousness. "There are technical details, such as the lettering, which must be sharp and crisp, with just the right amount of pressure applied, so that the impression is not too deep," says Doyle. "The tools must be at precisely the right temperature; otherwise, the leather can be scorched. The gilt rules and decorative rolls must meet perfectly at the corners."

Peter Harrington, the largest vintage-books dealer in Europe, founded Chelsea Bindery in 2000. Each year, the operation creates a catalog of about 160 first, limited, and special illustrated editions for Peter Harrington's two storefronts, located in Chelsea and Mayfair. It also accepts custom commissions and fabricates solander cases to protect the rare titles.

"Ultimately, a beautifully bound book reinforces the sense of pleasure one associates with a timeless tale or loved story," Doyle says. "It's a way to visually connect the physical object to the treasures contained within its pages."



ABOVE

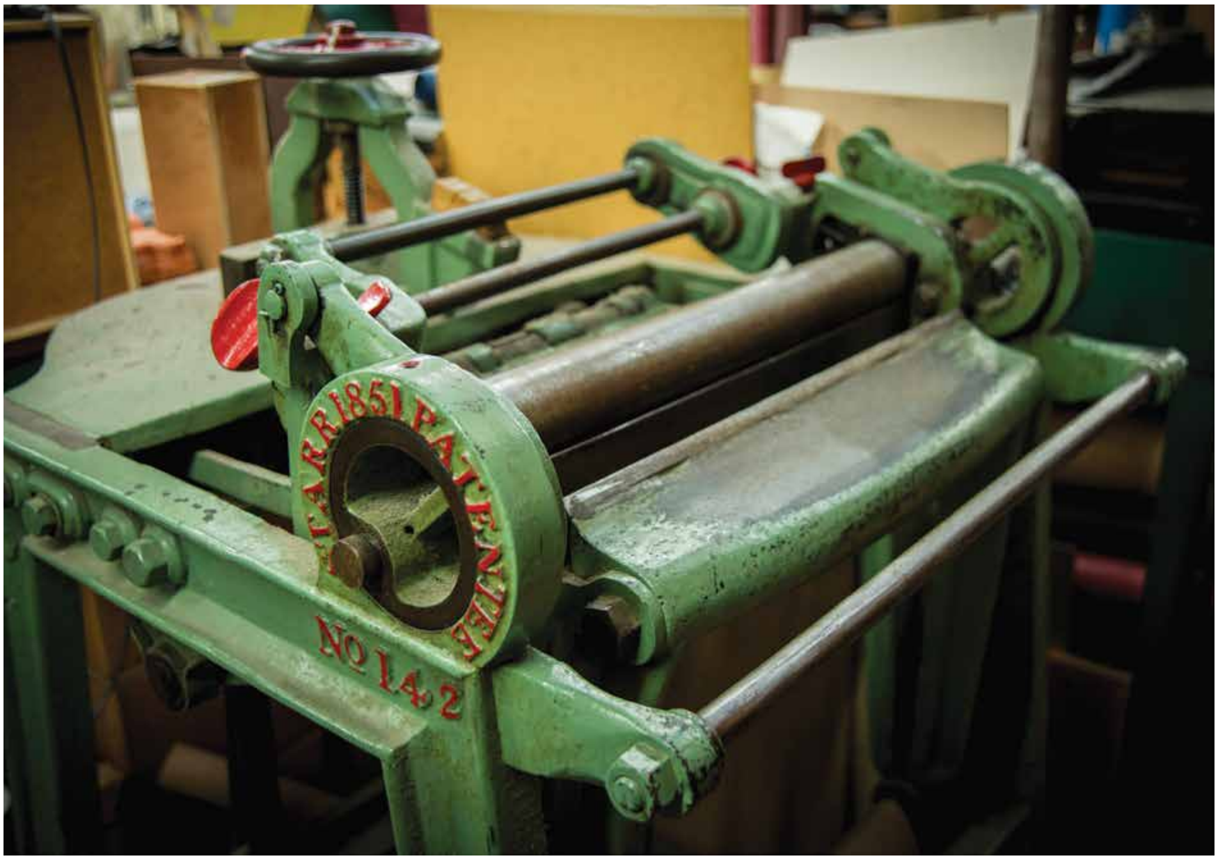
① **All Stitched Up**

The hand-sewing of sections of pages, known in the publishing trade as signatures, needs to be strong enough to hold the book together without being too bulky. A binder threads a needle with either cotton or polyester and stitches together a few sheets at a time. A volume takes about two hours on average, depending on the size and number of signatures.

ABOVE

② **On Edge**

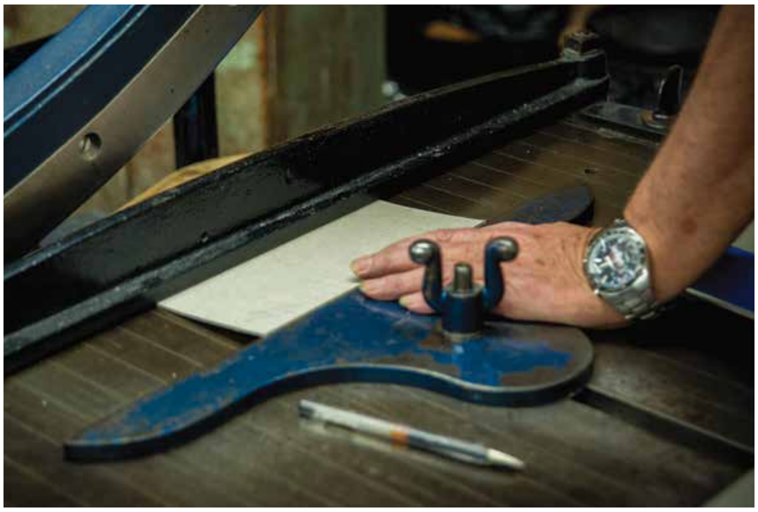
Once the pages are fastened together, the edges of the paper are sanded by hand until smooth. A bonding agent is applied and allowed to dry before a thin gold foil is ironed on and the excess wiped away in a process called gilding. “It stops dust from getting into the pages of the book,” explains Doyle. “In a lot of earlier books, you might just have a top-edge gild, but we tend to do ours with all edges.”

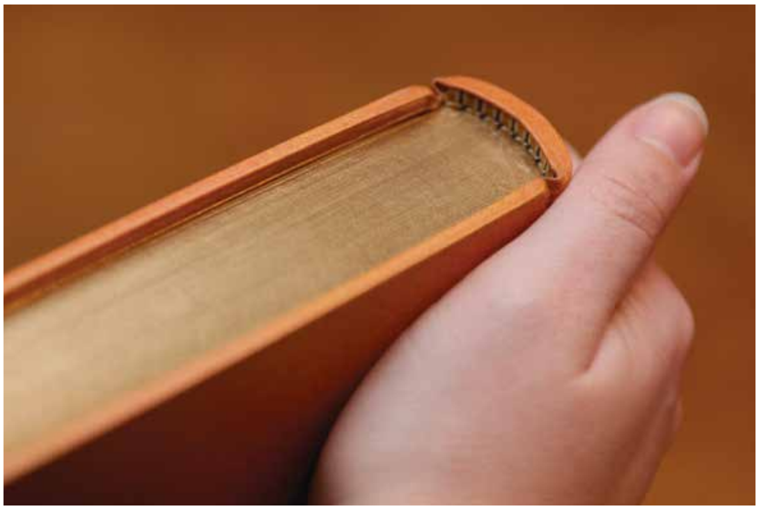


LEFT

③ **Hammer Time**

Next, the binder places the book block on a table and repeatedly hits the spine with a specialized tool called a backing hammer, which forms the spine’s distinctive curve. Then the block goes fore-edge down into a machine between two backing irons, where the worker strikes the spine again, moving outward from the middle, until it ultimately retains its shape.





ABOVE

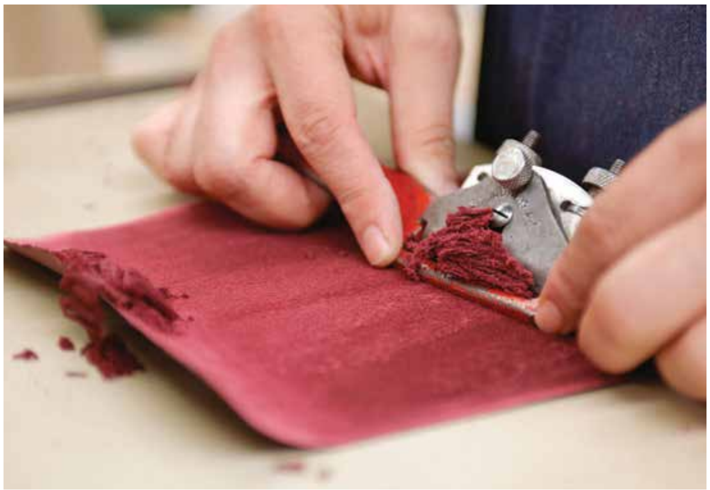
④ Just a Trim

The book boards, which act as the front and back covers, are critical components. First, millboards are measured to extend four millimeters beyond the pages and then cut via a board chopper. Later, the boards are attached to both sides of the book using PVA glue and left to dry for several hours.

ABOVE

⑤ Band Together

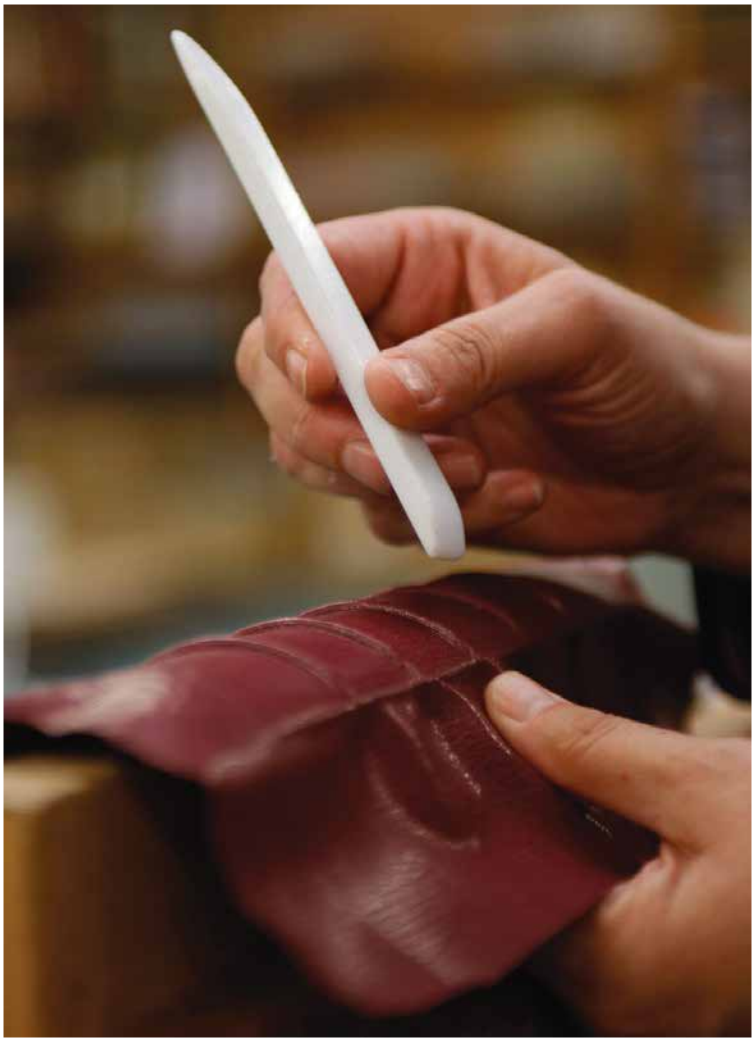
The headband is sewn into the top of the spine using two or three different-hued threads. "The colors correspond with the endpapers and the leather used for the cover," says head binder Tony Smith. Not only does the band add a subtle decorative element, it also protects the head and tail of the spine from damage when the book is pulled off the shelf.



ABOVE

⑥ Skin Deep

Leather—Moroccan goatskin, in this case—is cut to size for the cover and pared down using a spokeshave.



RIGHT

⑦ Cover to Cover

Before bonding the leather to the book, a binder creates the raised bands that run horizontally down the length of the spine by laminating together three separate pieces of leather, cutting them into five strips of three to four millimeters each, and gluing them on individually. To adhere the leather cover to the book, the goatskin is dampened and a paste is brushed onto the boards. The leather is then wrapped around the book, and a bandstick is used to press the material firmly onto the spine. Nippers help pinch the leather tightly around the raised bands. ➤

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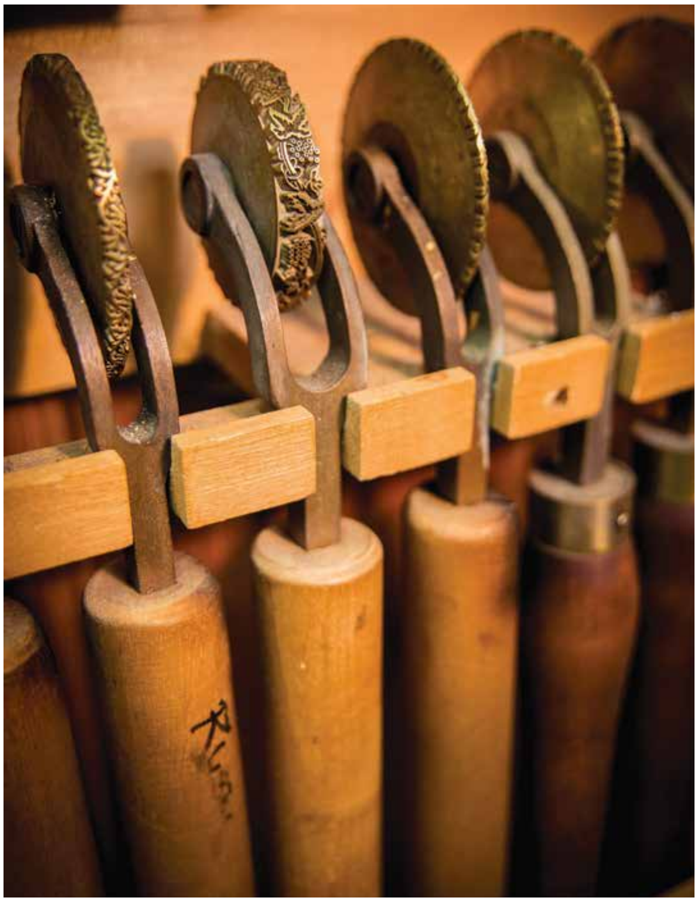
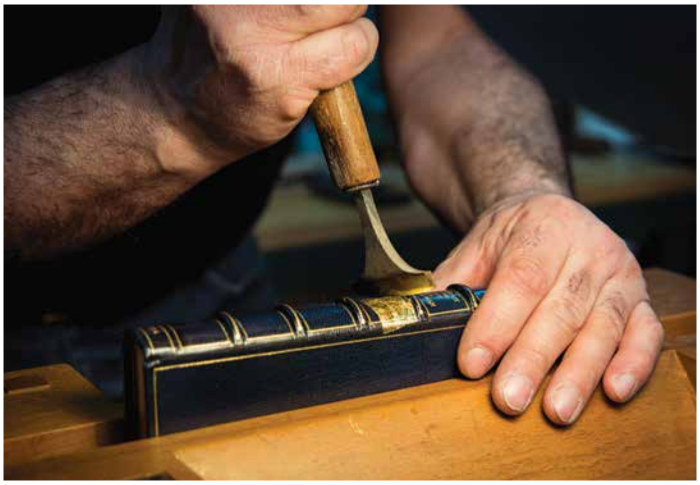


ABOVE

⑧ A Final Flourish

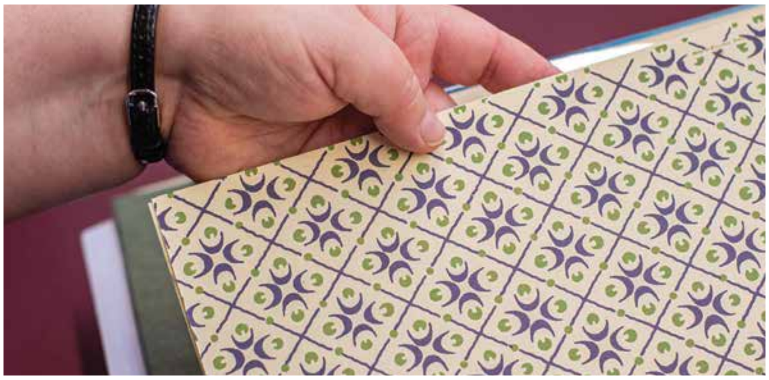
When it comes to the finishing, Doyle decides how to decorate the cover based on the period and genre. In some cases, the process involves creating ruled lines and other embellishments by running heated brass tools over a layer of 22-karat gold leaf. “What really sets one bindery apart from another is the skill of the master finisher,” Doyle says.

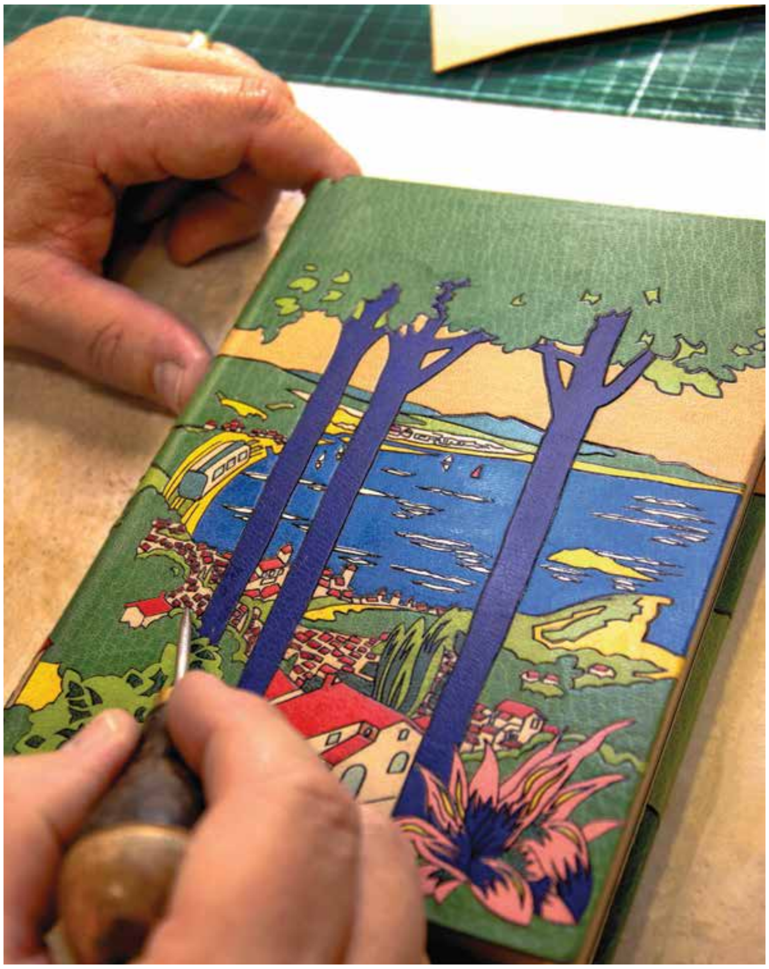


ABOVE

⑨ Naming Conventions

The title and date of first publication are stamped in gold leaf onto the spine at the top and bottom, respectively. The linotype machine that produces the lead slugs for titling came from the renowned Zaehnsdorf Bindery and dates back 100 years. “My engineer said it’s the oldest one in this country that’s running,” Smith notes.

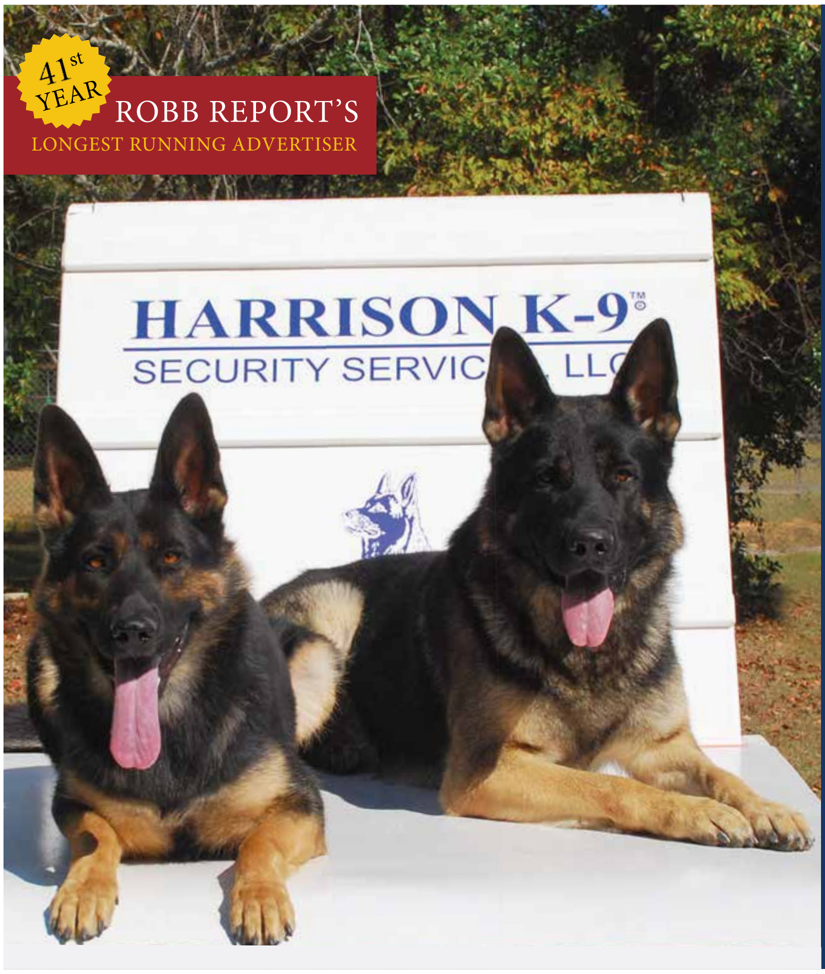




ABOVE

⑩ The End

A binder cuts individual pieces of colored leather and applies them to the cover to form the desired image (shown here: *Tender Is the Night* by F. Scott Fitzgerald). Lastly, endpapers are pasted inside the boards. “There’s definitely a school of thought that you choose the endpaper depending upon the period of the book,” Doyle says. “If it was *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest,* I might go for a modern, contemporary design. If I was doing something like *Pride and Prejudice,* which is earlier, then I would go for the marbled.” ●



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Summer's Perfect 10

Enjoy more moments in the sun with the top superyachts on the charter market.

The one-of-a-kind *Maltese Falcon* has undergone an extensive refit for sailing the Med.

Summer is on the horizon, so why not sail through the season aboard a superyacht from this selection of the largest, most distinctive, and sometimes offbeat vessels available for charter? Diverse amenities on unique vessels ranging from 144 feet to 377 feet include a sprawling owner's deck, an extensive water-toy trove, and even a glassed-in garden. Whether it's a newly built benchmark such as the 377-foot *Ahpo*, a reimagined classic like *Coral Ocean,* or a peerless design as seen with *Maltese Falcon,* each will be the pride of any port of call, from Sardinia to Saint-Tropez. **Julia Zaltzman**

1. *Phoenix 2* *(297 feet)*

Move over Jay Gatsby, Lürssen's *Phoenix 2* brings all the Art Deco that any fan of the 1920s aesthetic could want for a stylish cruise. With one helipad, one cinema, and two Jacuzzis, the Winch-designed yacht also doubles down on every other charter amenity. The sumptuous interior features a gilt-and-black-lacquer Steinway in the main-deck ballroom, a grand table with a crystal chandelier in the dining room, a gold bas-relief jazz mural, and a wine cellar. Guests can choose between immersion in the 23-foot pool or relaxation at the gold-mosaic hammam. *From Moran Yacht & Ship, starting at $1 million per week.*

2. *Wanderlust* *(279 feet, 8 inches)*

Conceived as a "sports-activity vessel," *Wanderlust* from Silveryachts is one of the newest entries on the 2023 charter market. Identified by its triangular windows—including a band of privacy glazing that encircles the dedicated owner's deck—the yacht also features a winter garden with sliding glass that creates an open-air, shaded terrace. *Wanderlust* also has a glass-fronted Jacuzzi on the sundeck, a 4,300-square-foot watersports hangar on the lower deck that doubles as tender storage, and an outdoor cinema area that converts into a nightclub. *From Burgess, starting at $953,000 per week.*

3. *Wheels* *(247 feet, 8 inches)*

With seven decks, Oceanco's *Wheels* arrives fresh from a 2022 refit with all the gadgets, toys, and tenders that guests could ever want. By day, a massage treatment on the large sundeck is a signature offering from the onboard masseuse; by night, passengers can enjoy the outdoor cinema (there's another one, with a surround-sound system, inside) or main-deck salon that transforms into a party area with disco lights and smoke machines. And half of the lower deck is given over to a giant water-toy box that includes a brand-new Hobie sailing catamaran. *From Fraser, starting at about $854,000 per week.*

← 4. *Maltese Falcon* (288 feet, 6 inches)

Perini Navi's *Maltese Falcon* is one of the most innovative sailing yachts ever built, with its three-masted, freestanding DynaRig and sails that automatically set in six minutes. A sweeping double refit in the past two years has improved its standing in the charter market, with features, such as the telescoping footbridge, that demonstrate the yacht's emphasis on improved usability. Plus, it now has an indoor theater to complement the outdoor cinema that uses the lower sail as a movie screen. *From Burgess, starting at $420,000 per week.*

5. *Falco Moscata* (162 feet, 5 inches)

This was the first Picchiotti Vitruvius motoryacht built by pedigreed Italian shipyard Perini Navi when it was delivered in 2010. The Philippe Briand design features a lightweight aluminum hull and superstructure, which enhance fuel efficiency by up to 30 percent. The yacht has recently enjoyed an extensive refit. A range of 5,500 nautical miles and extendable stabilizers make it ideal for traveling long distances in comfort. And the many aquatic toys are enhanced by crew who double as watersports instructors. *From Fraser, starting at about $216,000 per week.*

6. *Kenshō* (246 feet, 7 inches)

Kenshō is easy to spot with its striking blue hull and superstructure, but it's the Admiral yacht's unconventional interior that commands attention. The layout eschews tradition for asymmetry, with lofty ceilings, extra-wide walkways, and sea views from everywhere. It boasts a 20-foot glass-fronted pool set at sea level, a gym, a sundeck Jacuzzi, and a main salon/observation room with floor-to-ceiling windows. Then there's the main suite, which is made up of four interconnecting rooms—a lounge/media room, a bedroom, a walk-in dressing room, and a bathroom with a tub carved entirely from a single block of marble. *From Y.CO, starting at about $920,000 per week.*

7. *Ahpo* (377 feet, 6 inches)

Lürssen's *Ahpo* was the darling of the 2022 Monaco Yacht Show, where it made its world debut, and this year it's open for charter. The stunning design accommodates up to 16 guests in eight immense staterooms, including a two-story owner's apartment. There are also four cabins for personal staff, along with quarters for the yacht's 33-person crew. *Ahpo*'s enormous beach club has a mosaic-tiled hammam, a plunge pool, a sauna, a massage room, and a beauty salon. *From Moran Yacht & Ship, starting at $2.75 million per week.*

8. *Lammouche* (144 feet, 3 inches)

For those who feel the allure of a motoryacht charter but shy away from fossil-fuel travel, *Lammouche* offers the perfect solution. The 144-foot vessel from Sanlorenzo is the only yacht on the global charter market to be powered by biofuel. The renewable, hydro-treated vegetable oil that powers the craft reduces carbon emissions by up to 90 percent. Cruising the Dalmatian coast this summer, the yacht is equipped with a 37-foot chase boat for exploration, while *Lammouche*'s sundeck Jacuzzi and a lower-deck beach club are ideal for relaxing. *From Burgess, starting at about $197,000 per week.*

9. *Coral Ocean* (239 feet, 6 inches)

Launched from the Lürssen yard in 1994 and featuring a Jon Bannenberg design, *Coral Ocean* has long enjoyed a special place in the hearts of superyacht aficionados. It was one of the largest superyachts of its day, with an adventurous interior purposefully designed as an alternative to the ubiquitous bling common to the 1980s. Following a recent $35 million refit, the yacht underwent a transformation that saw the primary suite double in size and the development of a new streamlined, open upper deck with a glass-bottomed spa pool. *From Ahoy Club, starting at about $707,600 per week.*

10. *Cloud 9* (290 feet, 3 inches)

This year marks the first time that Oceanco's superyacht *Cloud 9* has been available for charter since its 2015 delivery. Ticking all the amenity boxes, the Dutch-built superyacht offers a pool, two Jacuzzis, and a wellness center with a beauty salon. An entire deck is given over to the owner's needs, with an office, a lounge area, a bedroom with double en suites, and a walk-in dressing room. In addition, the private owner's space has balconies on both sides and can convert into a cinema. A glass elevator provides easy navigation between decks. *From Burgess, starting at about $1.08 million per week.*

Toy Stories

Modern superyachts have become oversize toy chests, with new technologies and designs pushing the boundaries of aquatic recreation well beyond paddling around in a kayak or careening down a giant inflatable slide. From piloting your own personal sub beneath the waves to foiling across the surf, the following high-tech playthings represent a sea change in open-ocean fun. **Gemma Harris**

▲ U-Boat Worx Nemo

With a footprint similar to a pair of Jet Skis, the Nemo submersible was designed for transport on any yacht in the 100-foot-and-above range, though it's compact enough to be trailered behind a large SUV or pickup. Allowing one to travel in covert-operative style, the Nemo comes in single- or double-seat configurations (priced at about $588,000 and $637,000, respectively) with both versions able to reach a maximum depth of 330 feet. The battery-powered propulsion lasts up to eight hours, though range is, of course, depth-dependent.

▼ Kawasaki Ultra 310LX

Arguably the most technical personal watercraft available, Kawasaki's Ultra 310LX, starting at $20,299, features glowing bow "eyes" that are actually LED daytime running lights. Launch Control mode lets the electronic-control unit determine the perfect trim in various acceleration scenarios, and the Bluetooth sound system doubles the standard offering with four speakers. The most unusual feature? A rearview camera, which comes in handy when navigating a crowded marina.

▲ Lift4

The new Lift4 electric foiling board, starting at $11,995, has advanced features designed to accommodate most rider profiles. The Lift Full Range Battery offers ride times of up to 2.5 hours, and the carbon-fiber masts are paired with a sophisticated modular propulsion unit. The pistol-style controller has a customizable color screen, a milled-titanium trigger, and GPS to track speed and distance. Personalization ramps up with 12 color options, including metallic finishes.

▼ Seabob F5 SR

The most powerful of the Seabob F series comes with seven power levels to deliver everything from a leisurely glide to a full-throttle dive. Detailed in a rich-looking chrome, or a stealthier all-black presentation on request, the $17,780 electric craft also has a high-definition-camera system, including one on the bow and a second "selfie" cam on the information display. Twin rear fins assist with aggressive turns while adding to the sleek design.

▼ Bote SUP

Bote's Flood 12' Paddle Board is stable, easy to carry, and the perfect all-rounder in the stand-up paddleboard market. Beyond its vibrant aesthetics, the board (starting at $1,699) has a planing hull that glides through

chop and allows for precision turns. The “stash pod” at the stern keeps drinks cool and valuables safe, while the optional Tackle Rack is designed to keep your gear high, dry, and out of the water.

▲ Starboard iQFoil

Windsurfing’s sell-by date seemed to have passed in the 1990s, until Starboard resurrected the sport with the iQFoil, capable of cruising from 5 to 35 knots on its carbon-fiber foil. The iQFoil, starting at $10,299, is so advanced that it will be the official windsurfer of the 2024 and 2028 Olympics, with carbon-reflex technology that enables riders to adjust and control the craft in different wind conditions.

▼ Jet Shark

A four-seat semisubmersible, the Jet Shark is aptly named thanks to its apex-predator speed and agility. The craft combines a cushy, air-conditioned cabin with a helm console that resembles a fighter jet, and its 420 hp Kodiak marine engine even gives it the ability to leap out of the water. With an option-dependent price between $200,000 and $300,000, the machine is in its final testing phase.

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> Since the pandemic’s start, the unprecedented growth of jet cards in private aviation has not been without turbulence.

It has been a topsy-turvy time for jet cards, one of the most popular forms of booking a private aircraft. Less expensive than fractional ownership and more consistent than on-demand charter, 20 new jet-card offerings have been introduced since the pandemic hit in 2020. “Folks who fly privately tend to be busy,” says Doug Gollan, president of Private Jet Card Comparisons. “The fixed-rate, guaranteed-availability cards make it easy: A call, text, email, or use the app, and bang—you’re booked in less than a minute.”

From the lone Sentient Jet Card introduced 25 years ago, the number of programs has skyrocketed to more than 80. But during 2021 and much of 2022, as private aviation experienced record demand and a chronic shortage of available aircraft, 30 companies paused aspects of their cards or ceased selling them altogether for fear of not being able to service existing clients. The most famous was industry giant NetJets, which put its entire card program on hold in August 2021 and only recently resumed sales. Seven others, including big names such as Jet Aviation and Silver Air, still have their fixed-rate, guaranteed-availability card platforms grounded.

Magellan Jets also experienced this simultaneous popularity boom and delivery bust. It kept its card programs aloft during the height of the pandemic, as many providers did, by changing the rules: pushing back guaranteed access from 8 hours to 72, increasing minimum flight times from one to two hours, and blacking out Mexico and the Caribbean as primary service areas. ➤

"It was all about minimizing risk," says Magellan Jets president Anthony Tivnan. "If a jet had a flat tire or cracked windshield, it could be out of commission for days, if not weeks. The goal was to keep as many aircraft flying as possible," he adds. Yet despite the restrictions and constant service interruptions, clients kept buying. From 2020 through 2022, Magellan saw a growth of 65 percent in new cards, with renewals up 75 percent.

Many customers gravitated to the fixed-rate cards because on-demand charter, with its dynamic pricing, was chaotic. "Charters were everywhere—the same flight cost $30,000 one week and $13,000 another," Gollan says. "Some programs start at 10 hours, so people bought those for one trip to lock in the price and availability."

New providers took innovative tacks. Start-up Volato introduced a capped hourly rate for flying its regional HondaJet fleet, but without guaranteed availability. "It's a more optimal way to run a fleet," says CEO Matt Liotta. "Clients get a credit by being flexible with departure times." FlyExclusive uses its fractional fleet of over 90 aircraft, including the world's second-largest fleet of Cessna Citation jets, to service its Jet Club–card members. "We fly 99.6 percent of members on our airplanes, so we aren't subject to the whims of the market," says its CEO, Jim Segrave. "We see cards as a way to lock in long-term clients. They'd prefer not to negotiate prices every single trip."

But the number of new players has muddied the waters. "It's a less one-size-fits-all world, with many nuanced variations," says Gollan. "A provider that works well for short flights isn't always cost-effective for long flights. Some guarantee Wi-Fi, others don't. Cancellation terms vary."

Andrew Collins, co-CEO of Flexjet, of which Sentient is a leading private-jet-card brand, expects to see even more firms with new offerings, thanks to the growing supply of available aircraft. But he also advises due diligence. "We're seeing some irrational behavior in the market," he says. "Companies are coming in and trying to undercut lead times—sometimes in a ridiculous way—to distinguish themselves."

Despite some of the biggest names taking a hiatus, Gollan's surveys show a year-over-year increase in activity, with 81 percent of his members planning to use a card in 2023, often with different types of aircraft. "It's like having a convertible for Florida and an SUV for the lake house," he says. "People often use multiple solutions based on needs." **Michael Verdon**

WHEELS

End Notes

Motoring through Spain in Jaguar's last purely internal-combustion-engined sports car.

I suppose this is it. The beginning of the end. No, not even that. The end of the end. Before me, poised like a scorpion on a hot rock and looking slick in Ligurian satin black, is Jaguar's F-Type R75 Coupe, a 567 hp, 5.0-liter clenched fist of supercharged V-8. It looks fantastic. Like it would pick a fight in a nunnery. It's also the last sports car fit solely with an internal-combustion engine that the British marque will ever make, 75 years after its first, the peerless XK120. Strange and heavy words to write.

We've known for years that the automotive sector would be sending gas-guzzling cars the way of cigarettes and sunbeds, but even so, Jaguar's clean-sheet strategy feels all too soon. Its electrified fleet is due in 2025, along with a total brand reboot about which we know next to nothing, save that average on-the-road prices are set to enter six-figure territory. Jaguar's sales have been sluggish for years, and the automaker has decided that the only way to dig itself out is through lithium mines.

Yet if that's a bleak backdrop, the view before me is more cheerful. Ahead lies almost 500 miles of Spanish tarmac, the road to the beaches of San Sebastián, and a car begging to be remembered. Picking up the F-Type R75 at the Barcelona airport, I know that, in a straight line, I could make it to the northern coast in six hours. But instead, Jaguar has plotted a two-day route that, on a map, looks like it was drawn by someone asked to hold a pen for the first time.

North toward the Pyrenees I'll go, through towering gorges and up precipitous mountain passes, stopping to refill the reserves with gasoline and espresso. Not that I'll need the fuel ➤

RIGHT: **The writer soaking up the F-Type R75 Coupe's 567 hp soundtrack.** BELOW: **Jaguar's internal-combustion sports-car bookends, the XK120 and F-Type R75.**

injection. From the moment the R75 fires up its oversexed V-8, it gurgles with latent aggression, sending a surge of excitement through my soul and into my, well, general thigh area.

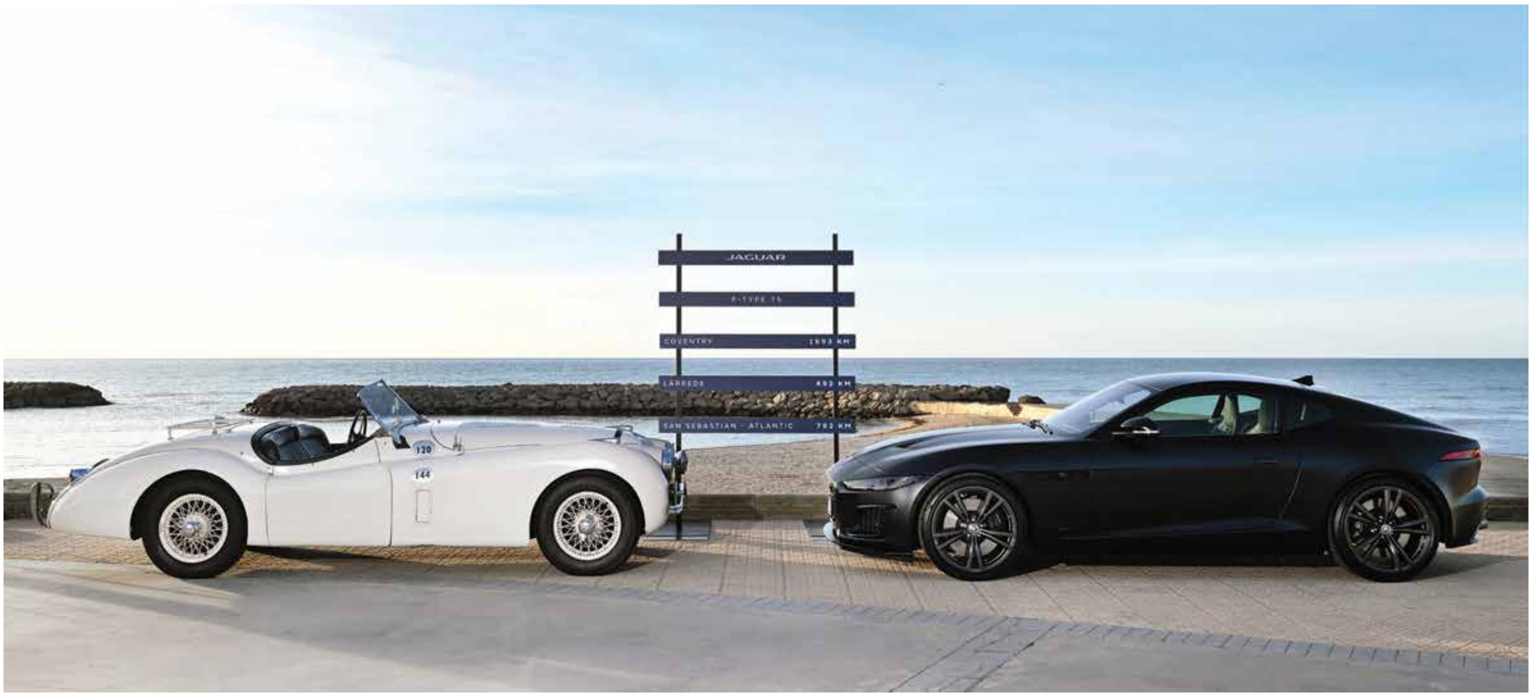
Out on the road, Gaudí's city a pinprick in the rearview mirror, it's not the speed you notice, even though the R75 will hit 60 mph from a standing start in 3.5 seconds. Not like you do in an electric car, where all there is to notice is the speed and the wind. Switching into manual and pumping the paddle shifters, I hear the car crackle and pop, raging like a bear that missed out on supper. The rev flare—as you push up to 6,000 rpm, then 7,000 rpm, and then flick it from second gear into third—is just glorious. It might be lazy to say so, but I can't recall feeling this alive in a car that runs on batteries.

Normally, one would suspect that lunch at the rustic riverside restaurant Les Nous, in the unassuming mountain town of Rialp, would be an enjoyably lengthy affair, but there's a mountain to climb, up past 6,700 feet to the Port de la Bonaigua pass, where on a balmy spring day a few mournful skiers are eking out the last of the snow. The roads are dry, dusted with a milky layer of salt, and the all-wheel-drive R75 proves obliging, more than once bringing itself back into line for me as hairpin follows hairpin.

If the views are lovely, so too is the car's interior. A panoramic roof and deep seats wrapped in soft black leather almost make it feel like a grand tourer, even for drivers of advanced height. Rolling into Hotel Viñas de Lárrede, in a tiny hamlet north of Huesca, after seven hours at the wheel, I feel like my eyes are still on stalks, despite having been up since 4 a.m. Fun trumps fatigue.

Day two takes us over the Coronas pass and up a roughly three-mile stretch of winding road that was either designed by a 12-year-old on an Xbox or created expressly for the R75. This being remote northern Spain, the paved arteries are as empty as the sky, and with the sun casting shadows through the pines, it's time to send the sound of that V-8 ricocheting off the looming rocks. At the summit, grin on full beam, there's just one thing to do: Turn around and do it all again.

The route north toward the Cantabrian Sea, the body of water that gives way to the Bay of Biscay and then the Atlantic, takes us from the coast to Pamplona, where the Jaguar draws waves from young boys more familiar with running bulls. As journey's end approaches, lachrymose thoughts return. This kind of snarling, vicious hooligan of a machine will soon depart the world, a final chapter in motoring's Old Testament. The electric covenant is nigh, and perhaps the Earth's salvation is at hand. But forgive me if I wish it weren't. Because it makes Jaguar's F-Type R75 Coupe the saddest fun car I've ever driven. **Robin Swithinbank**



Robb Report

in focus

BENETTI YACHTS benettiyachts.com

Calex is the 67-metre full custom by Benetti. Bespoke in every detail, with a sleek exterior styling and the interiors alternating light and dark colours shades, the yacht has indoor and outdoor spaces that ensure absolute privacy and comfort and cater to the owner's passion for exercise and well-being. TOP LEFT

PONANT us.ponant.com

Discover the polar regions aboard the world's only luxury icebreaker, *Le Commandant Charcot*. Set off in pursuit of the geographic North Pole or to Antarctica to seek Emperor penguins. Enjoy cuisine by Ducasse Conseil, attentive service, and luxury accommodations aboard. TOP RIGHT

REYNOLDS LAKE OCONEE reynoldslakeoconee.com

Reynolds Lake Oconee, the South's premier lake and golf community located just east of Atlanta, offers six golf courses, 11 restaurants, the Sandy Creek Sporting Grounds, a lakefront Ritz-Carlton, and a range of wellness, boating, and cultural amenities. BOTTOM LEFT

ALEX SEPKUS alexsepkus.com

Made in NYC, Alex Sepkus jewelry is collected for distinct design, signature textures and stones with personality. Each creation is a chapter, not in words but in shapes and textures. BOTTOM RIGHT

Of ICE and Men

WHEN IT COMES to collectibles, the earliest examples of any item are often the most coveted. Take Mickey Mantle's rookie-season baseball card, or a first edition of John James Audubon's *The Birds of America,* both of which can fetch eight figures. In the rarefied sphere of high-end automobiles, though, where the alpha and omega of significant models can be equally appealing—and, sometimes, equally pricey—collectors are now at a crossroads never before encountered.

The current market window has opened wide enough that legacy marques will soon be able to present both their first EVs and grand finales of lineups powered solely by internal-combustion engines (ICE). It begs an interesting question: Which will offer the greatest return on investment down the road—the vehicles at the end of an era, or those that usher in a new one?

"Collectors have always prized these 'bookends' of production, and it seems logical to expect this phenomenon to apply with ICE and electric cars," says Rupert Banner, global head of specialists at Bonhams Collector Cars. "The first, because they usually reflect the design of a car in its purest form," he says, "while the last in a series is usually the definitive, fully evolved car."

This pattern has already been observed with the likes of high-performance offerings from Lamborghini, which revealed its first V-12 plug-in hybrid at the end of March and will debut an all-electric Raging Bull by 2030. "There are two clear trends with our customers," says Andrea Baldi, CEO of Lamborghini America. "They would rather have an internal-combustion-engine car, if the regulations allow and if the manufacturer will be able to build it," he says, citing the increased demand for the Aventador Ultimae and Urus Performante, the last of their respective ICE-powered lines. But when it comes to future hybrids and pure EVs from Sant'Agata Bolognese, "they also want the next one." Baldi insists there's "complete acceptance" among the client base regarding Lamborghini's electrified future: "There's no hesitation."

> **"In my opinion, the last V-12s are going to be the most valuable."**

AVENTADOR
ULTIMAE

Spectre (top) is the first all-electric model from Rolls-Royce Motor Cars, while the Ultimae (above) is the last solely ICE-powered car in Lamborghini's Aventador model line.

Yet while there will always be a draw to the latest and greatest, only history can ultimately weigh the value of a collectible with an engine versus one with a battery. "Much is still in flux with the future of transportation in the realm of different technologies, not just limited to electric vehicles but also to alternative fuel and engine systems," says David Gooding, founder and president of automotive auction house Gooding & Company. "While EVs and hybrids may become mainstays in the car world, the increased exclusivity, rarity, and limited access to traditionally gasoline-powered cars will continue to sustain their increasing value as collectibles over time."

Although nobody can say for certain how market values will eventually map out, conventional engines have historically been driving factors in defining an automobile's artistry and character—not to mention its collectibility—and can prove only scarcer as the car transitions from true machine to tech-laden tablet on wheels.

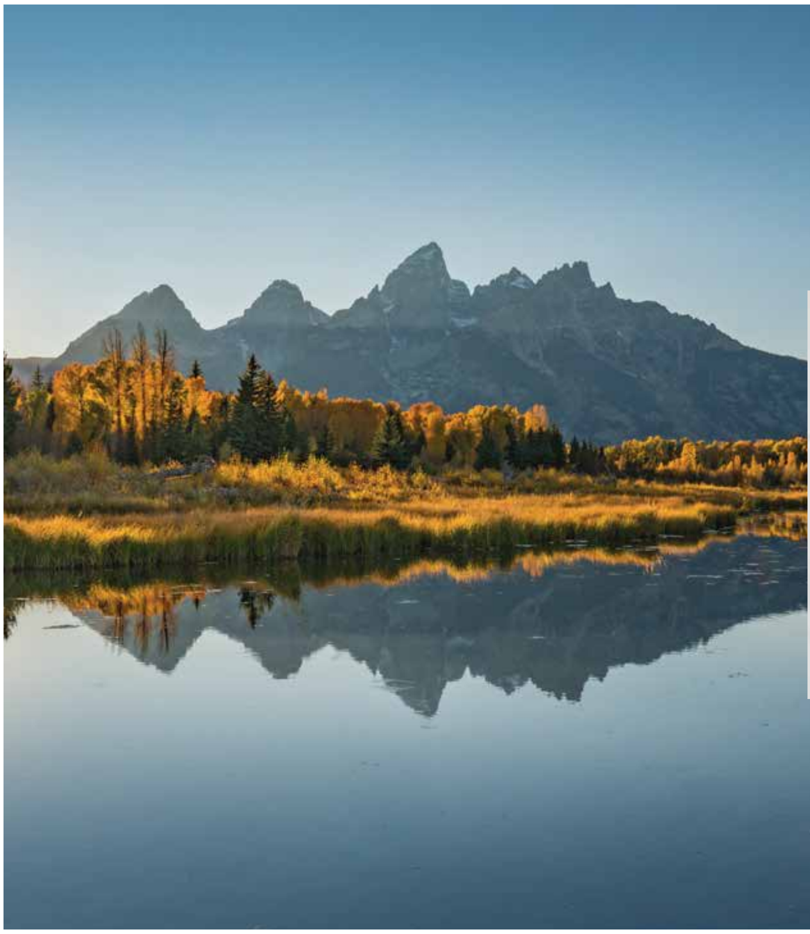
"The technical aspect of an ICE is most likely to remain more interesting over time, for the same reason that there remain many mechanical-watch brands long after the introduction of digital watches," says Banner. "From an engineering perspective, it is just more complex, and the 'how it works' aspect is more fascinating."

That assessment is especially prescient when considering badges that have been around from almost the beginning. Although its all-electric Spectre will start delivery at the end of the year, Rolls-Royce acknowledges an upcoming milestone that will likely overshadow it: the production of the very last Roller to be powered by internal combustion. "We will do something unique, very creative and spectacular," says Martin Fritsches, president and CEO of Rolls-Royce Motor Cars Americas. "In my opinion, the last V-12s are going to be the most valuable. Yes, the first Spectres are going to be interesting too, but, proportionally, from an economic perspective, the last V-12s are going to be way more attractive—I'm sure about it."

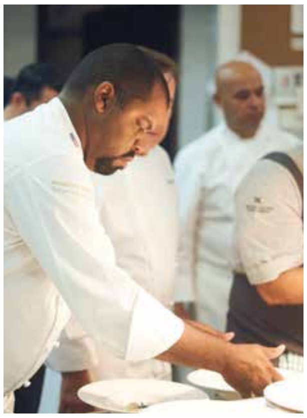
Viju Mathew

Robb Report

Culinary Masters



Join Us in Jackson Hole, WY



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Join Robb Report and a handful of the nation's top culinary masters at the stunning Four Seasons Jackson Hole this fall for a delicious escape.

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TECH

Grilling's Golden Age

Forget bags of charcoal briquettes and bottles of lighter fluid—cooking that perfect cut has gone cutting-edge.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: **Traeger's Timberline XL; Kalamazoo Gaucho; TEC 44-inch Sterling Patio FR Island; Kenyon's Texan Electric Grill.**

For those who believe that the main purpose of fire is to make meat taste better, the quest for the holy grail of grilling never ends. In the past half decade, advances such as infrared cooking and remote sensors have made the summertime tradition a bit more scientific. Here are four hi-tech systems that will turn any backyard BBQ into a sizzling success. **Nicolas Stecher**

Traeger Timberline XL

Traeger continues optimizing its famed wood-pellet grills to set the market standard in precise, consistent temperature control. In addition to unprecedented customization options and patented engineering to bathe your meat in delicious woodsmoke, the $3,799 Timberline XL features a full-color touch screen offering a "set-it-and-forget-it" mode, and will even perform regular maintenance checks. Loaded with two Meater wireless thermometers, an improved 360 Wi-Fi antenna, and the Traeger app, the top-of-the-line Timberline XL (when connected to the internet) allows cooks the freedom to monitor and control every aspect of their weekend BBQ from nearly anywhere—including the couch on NFL Sundays.

Kalamazoo Gaucho Grill

Kalamazoo disrupted the grill game with its flagship Gaucho, hand-built in Michigan. Superbly engineered, the original model included a whisper-quiet motorized rotisserie big enough for a suckling pig, heavy-gauge 304 stainless-steel construction, and a double-walled firebox. Starting at $31,855, the Gaucho has recently been upgraded with orange-glowing LED bezels, allowing you to check the status of each burner at a glance, and, to meet stringent global safety requirements, integrated valves with flame sensors that won't allow gas to flow unless fire is detected.

Kenyon Texan Electric Grill With IntelliKEN Touch

Designed and built in Connecticut, Kenyon's latest model is fully electric. And while purists may bemoan the absence of wood or fire, the $3,370 Texan Electric Grill is perfect for locations where open flames aren't an option, including boats, RVs, and apartment balconies. The maritime-grill specialist recently upgraded its IntelliKEN Touch system, doubling the number of heat settings—up to 16—on its waterproof touch-control, for sharper precision. Yet the IntelliKEN Touch's most tech-forward innovation is Kenyon Kitchen: an Alexa Skills feature that offers recipes, tips, and other instructions via simple voice commands.

TEC 44-Inch Sterling Patio FR Island

After more than 40 years perfecting the technology, the inventors of the infrared (IR) grill only keep improving on their innovation, as seen with TEC's 44-Inch Sterling Patio FR Island. The advantages that IR grills offer are manifold: They get insanely hot, incredibly fast, reaching max searing temps in under 10 minutes compared to 30 for charcoal. They also use half the energy versus gas, and yet still generate heat as high as 1,200°F compared to a gas grill's ceiling of 750°F. The quickness and intensity of the IR temperature blast are ideal for steaks—give a Wagyu tomahawk a go on TEC's $11,999 beauty, and you'll be an instant convert. ●

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FIELD NOTES

By James Stewart

Awe, Man

TRAVEL Experiencing the hottest new hotel, most acclaimed new restaurant, and buzziest far-flung destination is all well and good, but travel's true reward is the wonderment it sparks within.

ILLUSTRATION BY
LARS LEETARU

On the third night of my camel trek from Jaisalmer, India, figures from the desert materialized in our camp: an old man swaddled in shawls and a boy clutching a plastic oil canister. Greetings made, they sat by our fire.

From his shawls, the man pulled out two flutes and began to play—a fluid, warbling melody over a low drone. The boy drummed his empty canister, producing booms and gulps like a tabla. Sparks crackled. The sky boiled with stars. In the intense silence between songs, you could hear the infinity of the universe. Although wrapped in a blanket, I had goose bumps.

What I was experiencing was awe—and according to a recent book, it was more profound than you might imagine.

In *Awe: The New Science of Everyday Wonder and How It Can Transform Your Life*, Dacher Keltner, professor of psychology at UC Berkeley, argues that “the feeling of being in the presence of something vast that transcends your current understanding of the world” ranks among the most poorly understood yet most powerful emotions we possess.

Keltner’s analysis of the replies of 2,600 respondents from 26 countries to his questionnaire regarding awe-inspiring experiences finds eight sources of the emotion (“the eight wonders of life”), from the obvious such as nature, music, visual art, and mystical experiences to less tangible things such as the “moral beauty of others” (kindness, courage, etc.), epiphanies, and life-or-death experiences. Awe silences our narcissistic egos, Keltner argues. It makes us look beyond ourselves to ask big questions about existence and the universe, maybe to seek answers, whether spiritual or scientific.

For most of my traveling life, I’ve been an awe junkie. In the quest for experiences to elicit a “wow” or an “aah”—universal vocalizations of awe, Keltner discovers—I’ve trekked through the Annapurna range in the Himalayas and driven the Pamir Highway into the sunbaked badlands of Tajikistan, a high-altitude desert of horizon-shoving scale where fire-blackened sheep skulls in roadside shrines drip-fed into my hypoxia-induced dreams.

In search of awe, I traveled to South Australia’s Neptune Islands to dive with great white sharks. Once I faced down my “what ifs”—What if my oxygen runs out? What if the cage’s hoist cable snaps?—that science research trip was oddly moving. It felt a huge privilege to dangle over 60 feet underwater among these apex predators. I saw their evolutionary genius, even their beauty. After three dives, I recognized individual creatures.

The surprise is awe lies closer to home. “Cultural assumptions suggest awe is this mysterious feeling that only happens through meeting God or looking at the Grand Canyon,” Keltner tells me. “It turns out it’s one of the most commonplace emotions. You can cultivate it and feel it a couple of times a week. You slow down, pause, don’t try to pursue goals or label things. Then you think about those eight wonders in intentional ways.”

If this sounds like mindfulness, perhaps it is. If we experience more awe while traveling, maybe it’s because that’s when we’re more present. Once we’ve stepped off work’s merry-go-round, we notice the details. Last year, walking the Via degli Dei footpath, 80 miles from Bologna to Florence along ancient Etruscan and shepherd paths, I sat for an hour watching the wind pulse through a sun-silvered meadow. A sentence flitted around my head: “He who can no longer pause to wonder and stand rapt in awe is as good as dead.” Not a quote from a liberal academic but Albert Einstein. His wonder of physics led to E=MC^2.

Another time on the same trail, I dawdled through a forest where the Roman legions once marched: Gold coins of sunlight scattered across a mossy road, the canopy rippling overhead like the surface of the ocean. It felt profound for reasons I couldn’t explain, except in terms of my insignificance compared to such age and beauty.

The most frequent source of awe among Keltner’s respondees was other people: “Those two findings, of recognizing most awe in moral beauty and everyday awe, blew me away. The everyday is the great provenance of awe, and our challenge is to find it: in patterns of light in the sky, the singing of kids, in human connections.”

One morning on the Via degli Dei, the twinkly, 70-something owner of an inn stopped me as I was heading out. “For energy on the route,” Jolanda explained as she gave me homemade almond-and-orange-zest biscuits called cantucci. When pressed, she admitted she’d risen at 5 a.m. to bake them. It’s nothing, she said with a shrug. I almost welled up. And this is where things get interesting.

Keltner suggests that awe bestows evolutionary advantage. Emotional tears occur when we recognize what binds us as communities. My goose bumps in the desert were a social mammal’s request for warmth via touch. “We’ve done research, and for groups to be effective, they need to collaborate, and the fact we’re so inspired by others’ moral beauty, even in strangers, tells us these good tendencies spread through networks and get stronger and more collaborative,” he explains. “That’s a big vein in evolutionary thinking right now.”

It’s a riposte to the individualism of Richard Dawkins’s “selfish gene.” And also why Keltner, after 20 years of studying happiness, believes awe is “the secret to living a good life of joy and meaning.” You could roll your eyes at this, if science wasn’t on his side. Awe experiences release oxytocin, the “love hormone” that promotes empathy. They also reduce anxiety by stimulating the vagus nerve between the nervous system and digestive tract.

Keltner says, “Go through what’s good for you on the medical checklist, and this mysterious emotion of awe hits every point: less stress, less physical pain for older people, better inflammation and immune profile, better cardiovascular profile. And that’s before a psychological profile of schoolkids becoming more curious, that you reason better, polarize political issues less, feel a greater sense of community.”

“Cultural assumptions suggest awe is this mystery that only happens through meeting God or looking at the Grand Canyon.”

What awe doesn’t involve is wealth—none of Keltner’s respondees cited money or possessions as sources of awe. I suspect we know this intuitively. It’s telling that the fastest growth in the luxury travel sector is in trips that connect us to the land and to local people. Fine dining in a spectacular hotel or resort can be borderline transcendent, but I bet the encounters and discoveries are what you remember most afterwards.

In *Awe*’s conclusion, Keltner writes: “The epiphany of awe is that its experience connects our individual selves with the vast forces of life. In awe we understand we are part of many things that are much larger than the self.”

That’s travel exactly. Like awe, travel can be a transformational experience. In fact, I’d argue that awe is why we go away in the first place. Freed of routine and familiarity, we want to open up, to rediscover our wonder at how extraordinary the world and humanity are. And that, Keltner shows, has the potential to make us better people. Now isn’t that a good excuse to take a vacation? ●

James Stewart is a U.K.-based journalist who writes about travel and sailing.

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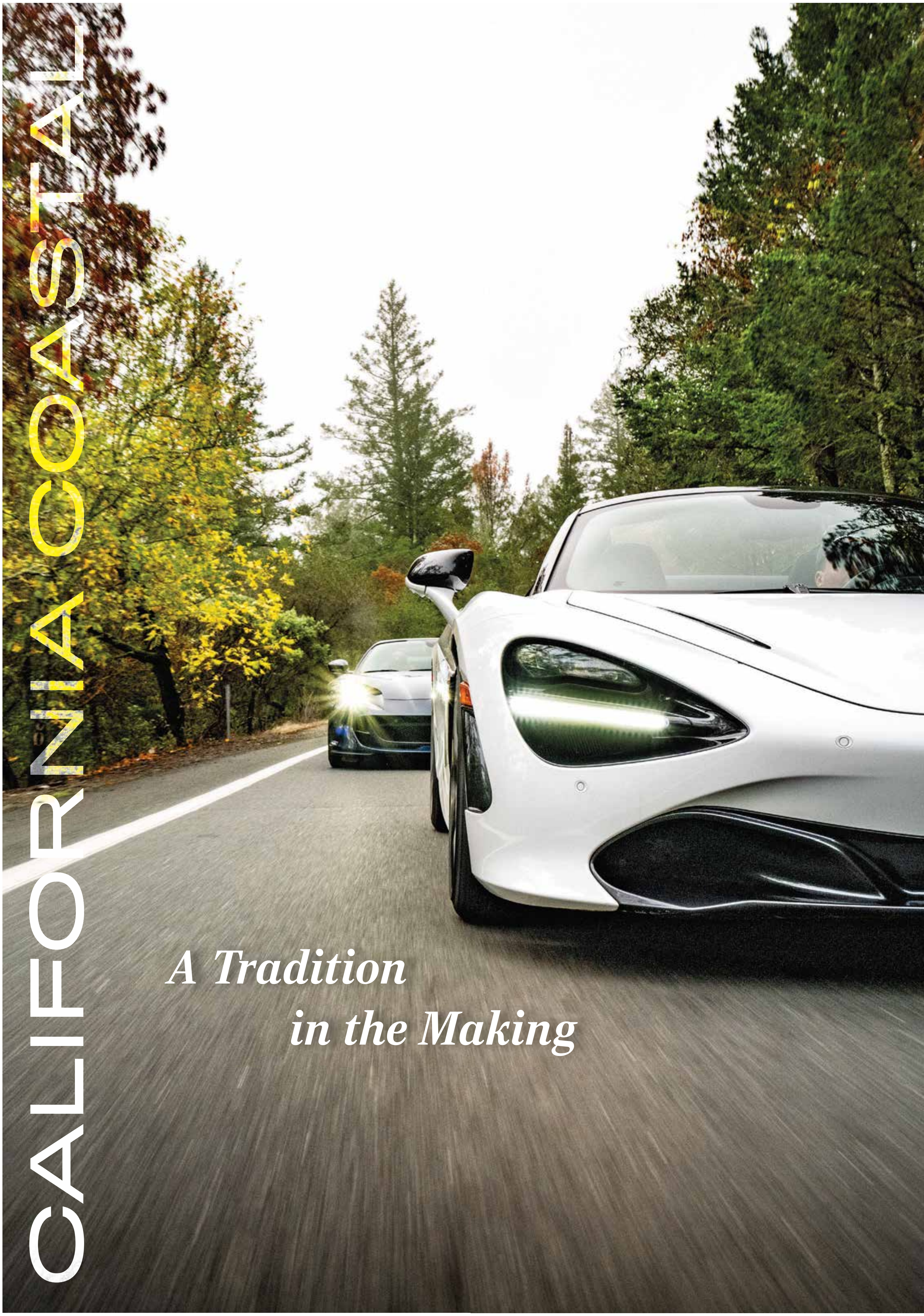
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Waterfront Living

The Charms of a Waterfront Lifestyle

A glistening expanse of blue, highlighted by the sun's rays hitting the water—seascapes and ocean panoramas like these have a strange power to lift one's spirits and transport the mind. That is the allure of waterfront living. Homes that edge the coast—in tropical or temperate climes—promise to slow the pace of a too-hurried life and alleviate the stresses of the modern world.

Courtesy of Del Mar Los Cabos

A New Neighborhood Offers Residential Possibilities on the Los Cabos Waterfront

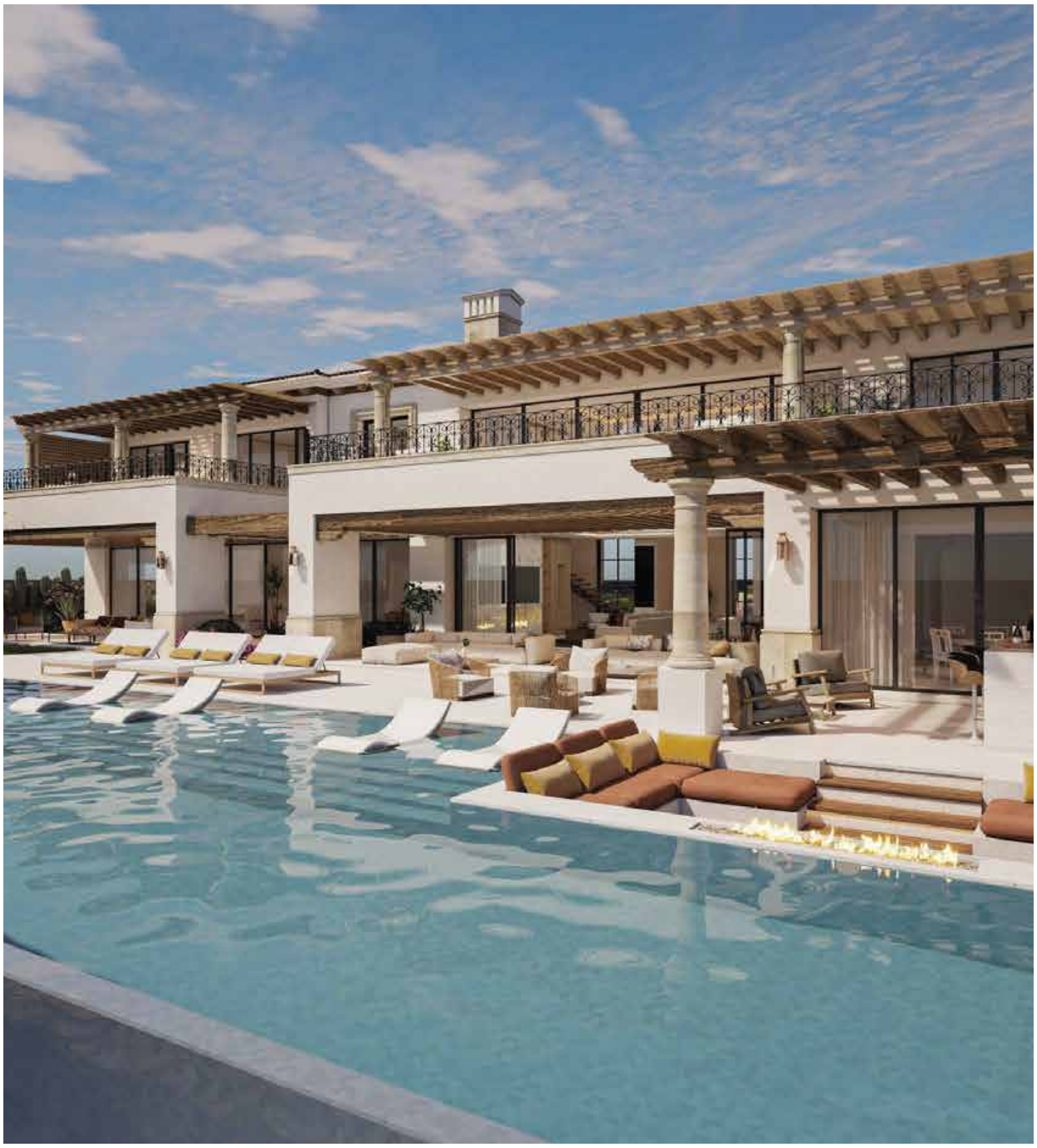
Del Mar communities welcome Legado to the portfolio.

Sunny Los Cabos is home to the renowned residential enclaves of Villas Del Mar and Espiritu Del Mar, which extend to the Palmilla waterfront, a premier location for oceanside living in Baja. For more than 25 years, these Del Mar communities have epitomized excellence in every respect.

Residents of Del Mar see one another as more than homeowners—they become neighbors and friends in a vibrant community of unique homes inhabited by fascinating people who celebrate their shared success in an endless variety of ways.

Residents savor the best of Palmilla, Los Cabos, as they travel by golf cart between their homes and the Espiritu Town Center, which now includes an Italian restaurant as well as the exclusive Cafe Espiritu, the members-only Club 96 and the Espiritu Fitness Center. They'll also find the boutiques and eateries of The Shoppes at Palmilla, the spectacular One&Only Palmilla resort and the Palmilla Golf Club. Any amenity they might want is close at hand, right here in paradise.

The waterfront and sea-view properties are surrounded by natural beauty–from the shimmering Sea of Cortez to rugged mountain canyons–while virtually every home has a remarkable vista and is landscaped by towering palms and gorgeous native flora.



All of this and more is what makes the Del Mar communities a residential resort destination like no other. The waterfront and sea-view properties are surrounded by natural beauty—from the shimmering Sea of Cortez to rugged mountain canyons—while virtually every home has a remarkable vista and is landscaped by towering palms and gorgeous native flora.

Del Mar residences are built to standards that are among the highest in North America, and while no two homes are alike, all share architectural elements that respect and reflect Mexican cultural authenticity. Homeowner services ensure that living here is effortless, making these residential communities the finest in Mexico.

Now Del Mar Real Estate is offering the last remaining opportunity to build a home from the ground up in Villas Del Mar: Legado is a budding neighborhood where you can see your ideal residence become reality, creating something special for generations to come.

Del Mar Real Estate also has a wide variety of ownership possibilities starting at $5 million. For example, Villa 484, a unique 2,700-square-foot beachfront property in Villas Del Mar, boasts five bedrooms and a location at the foot of the Blue Flag–certified Palmilla Beach.

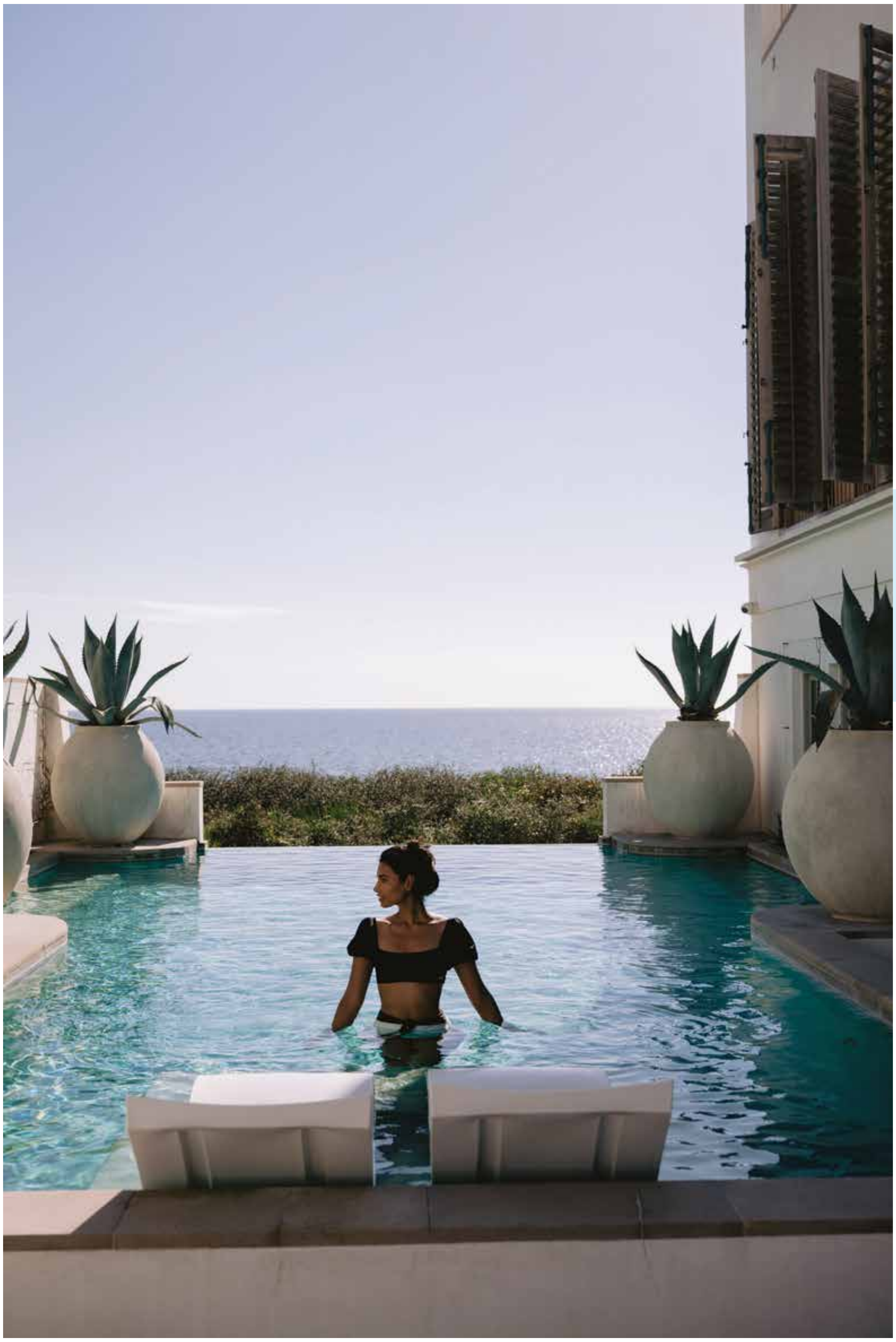
For more information on Del Mar Real Estate, go to delmarloscabos.com, call (US) 713.965.7551 or contact sales@delmarloscabos.com.

A Vibrant Community Rises on Florida's Panhandle

Alys Beach blends the beauty of the Gulf Coast with the New Urbanist ethos.

Edging the pristine white sands and sparkling turquoise waters of Northwest Florida's Gulf Coast, Alys Beach offers a bespoke, luxurious lifestyle for the 21st century. This is a town built for nurturing community, cementing relationships and creating lasting memories with family and friends. With 158 acres just a short walk from the gorgeous shore, Alys Beach is a masterful study in pedestrian-inspired New Urbanism, thanks to its exquisite architecture, brought to life by DPZ CoDesign of Miami and under the guidance of town architects Erik Vogt and Marieanne Khoury-Vogt. With thoughtful design in every detail, this serene escape allows for a simple way of life defined by moments of connection.

Known for its signature white Bermuda-influenced streetscapes



with their additional Mediterranean, Moorish and Antiguan-Guatemalan inspirations, Alys Beach is designed for the ages, constructed to meet the highest standards of the Institute for Business & Home Safety (IBHS); it's the first community in the United States to receive full certification as Fortified for Safer Living®. Well-appointed amenities—including the state-of-the-art ZUMA Wellness Center and the atmospheric Caliza pool and restaurant—complement the community's abundant picturesque pocket parks and pedestrian paths, the 20-acre Nature Preserve and nature trail, private beach access and a town center with fine dining and superbly curated shops. The most impressive amenity, however, is undoubtedly the owner-exclusive, gulf-front Beach Club, where residents of Alys Beach can enjoy both sunrise and sunset over one of the most beautiful stretches of coast in the country.

Life in Alys Beach is enhanced by an intentional approach to cultural and community development. There's a dynamic permanent collection of outdoor art and a robust program of events, from family-friendly seasonal programming and weekly live-music gatherings to intimate wine-and-spirits dinners. World-class festivals—the 30A Wine Festival, Digital Graffiti and Alys Beach Crafted—ensure that the cultural environment in Alys Beach is lively and sophisticated.

> "This is a town built for nurturing community, cementing relationships and creating lasting memories with family and friends."

A phased-release approach to development means that residential opportunities continue to arise for both custom and Somerset Program (semi-custom) purchases with a wider number of luxe choices. Phase 4, encompassing the latest ownership opportunities, is taking shape amid the rustic beauty of the northern end of the property, close to the nature preserve and wetland park. The new cottage homes there are designed by Hart Howerton Architects and feature a backyard that allows owners to fully embrace indoor-outdoor living. Central to these Phase 4 homes is the Silva amenity: a verdant event lawn, pool and a covered terrace with a bar and café. This is a place where one feels instantly at home.

Other legacy residential offerings are positioned to be released soon on both the north and sound ends of Alys Beach. These include single-family homes on the south side of Highway 30A—the iconic two-lane road that runs along Florida's Emerald Coast—as well as several condominiums, townhouses and row homes just steps from the beach. All are elevated by the breathtaking beauty of the community's natural and built environment.

Luxury, beauty, simplicity and grace. These are the elements that define Alys Beach and that transport residents to a lifestyle unequaled anywhere else.

For information about ownership opportunities at Alys Beach, call 850.213.5500 or visit alysbeach.com.

Discover a Sense of Community on the Sea of Cortez

Costa Palmas brings Baja's first luxury marina to your doorstep.

Miles of unspoiled coastline framed by the Sea of Cortez, with an abundance of land- and water-based experiences, Baja Mexico's East Cape exudes a rare and raw beauty. And there's no place that showcases this beauty quite like Costa Palmas, a private resort community nestled between the rugged landscape and a two-mile stretch of swimmable beach.

Just 45 minutes from the Los Cabos Airport and miles from the ordinary, this 1,500-acre community brings a new dimension of luxury to the East Cape. Complementing the dramatic Los Cabos countryside, Costa Palmas offers an incomparable lifestyle that includes a world-class golf course designed by Robert Trent Jones II, a vibrant beach and yacht club, a luxury marina and the first high-end hotel on the East Cape: Four Seasons Resort Los Cabos at Costa Palmas.

ELEMENTAL LUXURY AWAITS

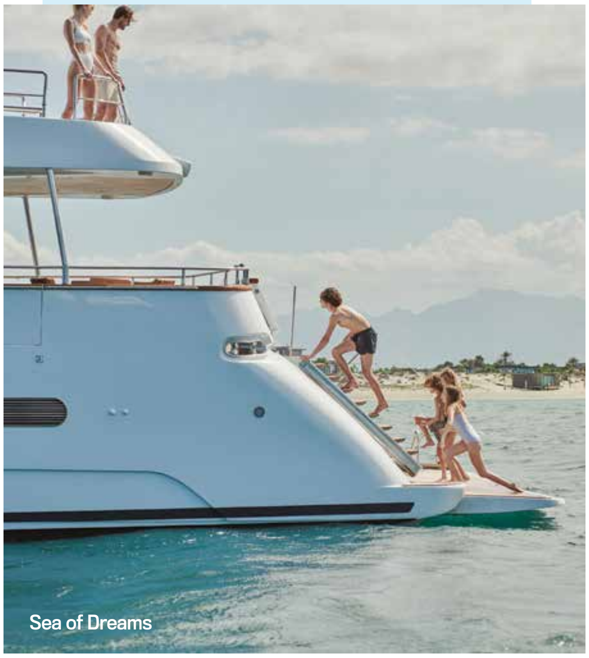
But the real treasures of Costa Palmas are undoubtedly its collection of gracious homes that are the very definition of elevated living. From the striking contemporary architecture of the Four Seasons Private Villas and Residences to the elegant beachside custom homes overlooking the golf course and adjacent to the marina, each property has been designed to be a serene, carefree retreat from the busy modern world.

A SENSE OF BELONGING

Homeowners at Costa Palmas connect to a warm, welcoming community of adventurers who savor life by the Sea of Cortez and exclusive benefits that include access to the beach and yacht club, the Aventura expeditions team, the golf club, the kids' club and more. Here you can rediscover the simple joys of connection, conversation and belonging in a magnificent setting.

Come home to the elemental luxury of Costa Palmas, with Baja's finest marina just outside your door.

> Come home to elemental luxury at Costa Palmas, with Baja's first luxury marina at your doorstep.



Sea of Dreams

Costa Palmas Beach Club

Four Seasons Marina Cove Villa

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A place wrapped in rugged mountains, untouched beaches and crystal blue waters awaits discovery as your new address. 45 minutes from the Los Cabos airport and miles from the ordinary, Costa Palmas is a master-planned resort community set by Baja's East Cape, on the swimmable Sea of Cortez. Homeowners will be part of a Beach and Yacht Club, Golf Club, Aventura and more—enjoying a lifestyle elevated by Baja's first luxury marina and enhanced by a sense of belonging.

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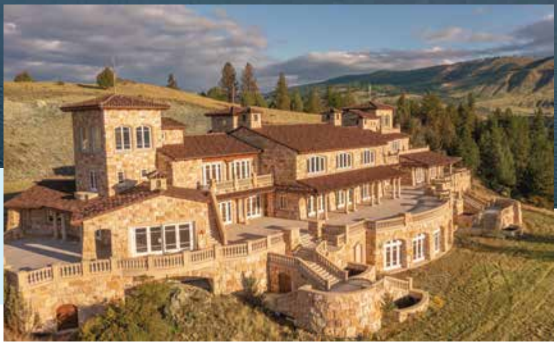

Cromwell Island

Like the cold, clear waters of Flathead Lake, mystique surrounds Cromwell Island. It overlooks the legendary Wild Horse Island, where Salish and Kootenai historically swam their horses to keep them safe from rival tribes. During low water periods (before the dam was built), the island became a peninsula, and horses were herded onto it before swimming them across. Cromwell Island is now a full-time island and up for sale. At nearly 350 acres, it has almost three miles of shoreline, making it the largest private island under a single ownership in freshwater west of the Mississippi River.

Flathead Lake, like Loch Ness, has its own monster, named "Flessie" by locals after a recorded sighting in 1889 by a steamboat captain and passengers of a "whale-like" creature in the water. Cromwell Island was bought in the 1980s by Robert M. Lee, an explorer, author, collector of antique arms and automobiles, and conservationist. Mr. and Mrs. Lee began construction of a 45,000 square-foot residence and, though it was never fully finished, it carries a magnitude of presence reminiscent of Versailles. With Cromwell Island up for sale, a new owner can write the next chapter of this storied place.

Dayton, Montana
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406.360.3141
mcdavid@hallandhall.com

hallhall.com

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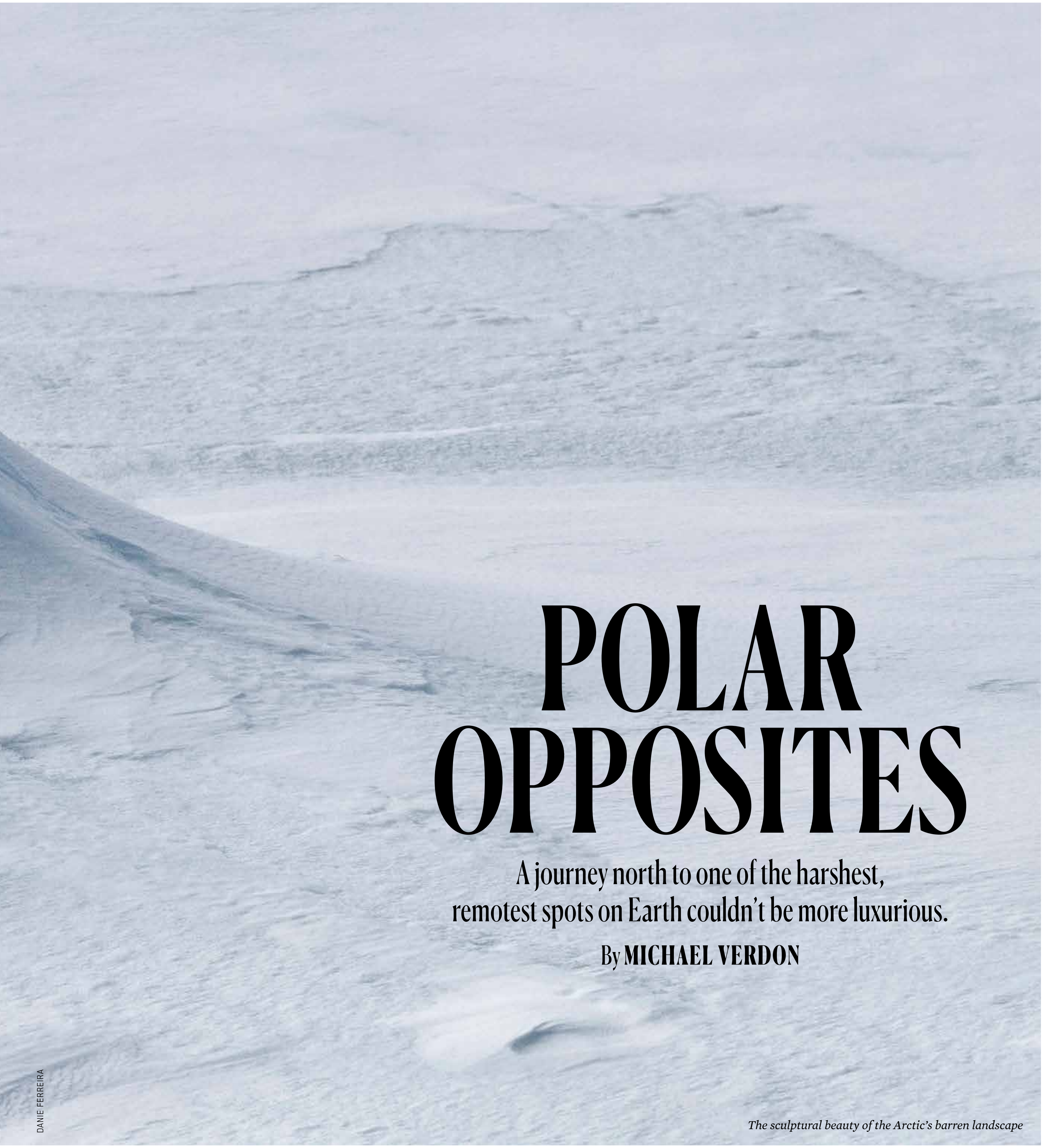


POLAR OPPOSITES

A journey north to one of the harshest, remotest spots on Earth couldn't be more luxurious.

By **MICHAEL VERDON**

The sculptural beauty of the Arctic's barren landscape

DANIE FERREIRA

A century ago, an expedition to the North Pole involved dogsleds and explorers in heavy, fur-lined clothes, windburned and famished after weeks of trudging across ice floes, finally planting their nations' flags in the barren landscape. These days, if you're an American tourist, the only way to reach 90 degrees north latitude, the geographic North Pole, is aboard *Le Commandant Charcot,* a six-star hotel mated to a massive, 492-foot ice-breaking hull.

My wife, Cathy, and I are among the first group of tourists aboard Ponant's new expedition icebreaker, the world's only Polar Class 2–rated cruise ship (of seven levels of ice vessel, second only to research and military vessels in ability to maneuver in Arctic conditions). Our arrival on July 14 couldn't be more different from explorer Robert Peary's on April 6, 1909. On that date, he reported, he staked a small American flag—sewed by his wife—into the pole, joined by four Inuits and his assistant, Matthew Henson, a Black explorer from Maine who was with Peary on his two previous Arctic expeditions. (Peary's claim of being first to the pole was quickly disputed by another American, Frederick Cook, who insisted he'd spent two days there a year earlier. Scholars now view both claims with skepticism.)

Our 300-plus party's landing, on Bastille Day, features the captain of the French ship driving around in an all-terrain vehicle with massive wheels and an enormous tricolor flag on the back, guests dressed in stylish orange parkas celebrating on the ice, and "La Marseillaise," France's national anthem, blaring from loudspeakers. After an hour of taking selfies and building snow igloos in the icescape, with temperatures in the relatively balmy low 30s, we head back into our heated sanctuary for mulled wine and freshly baked croissants. Mission accomplished. Flags planted. Now, lunch.

As a kid, I was fascinated by stories of adventurers trying to reach the North Pole without any means of rescue. In the 19th century, most of their

LE COMMANDANT CHARCOT
PONANT

attempts ended in disaster—ships getting trapped in the ice, a hydrogen balloon crashing, even cannibalism. It wasn't until Cook and Peary reportedly set foot there that the race to the North Pole was really on. Norwegian Roald Amundsen, the first to reach the South Pole, in 1911, is credited with being the first to document a trip over the North Pole, which he did in 1926 in the airship *Norge*. In 1977, the nuclear-powered icebreaker *Arktika* became the first surface vessel to make it to the North Pole. Since then, only 18 other ships have completed the voyage.

Visiting the North Pole seemed about as likely for me as walking on the moon. It wasn't even on my bucket list. Then came *Le Commandant Charcot,* which was named after France's most beloved polar explorer and reportedly cost about $430 million to build. The irony of visiting one of the planet's most remote and inhospitable points while traveling in the lap of luxury doesn't escape me or anyone else I speak with on the voyage. Danie Ferreira, from Cape Town, South Africa, describes it as "an ensemble of contradictions bordering on the absurd." Ferreira, who is on board with his wife, Suzette, is a veteran of early-explorer-style high-Arctic journeys, monthslong treks involving dogsleds and real toil and suffering. He booked this trip to obtain an official North Pole stamp for an upcoming two-volume collection of his photographs, *Out in the Cold,* documenting his polar adventures. "Reserving the cabin felt like a betrayal of my expeditionary philosophy," he says with a laugh.

Then, like the rest of us, he embraces the contradictions. "This is like the first time I saw the raw artistry of Cirque du Soleil," he explains. "Everything is beyond my wildest expectations, unrelatable to anything I've experienced."

The 17-day itinerary launches from the Norwegian settlement of Longyearbyen, Svalbard, the northernmost town in the Arctic Circle, and heads 1,186 nautical miles to the North Pole, then back again. As a floating hotel, the vessel is exceptional: 123 balconied staterooms and suites, the most expensive among them duplexes with butler service (prices range from $38,190 to $89,170 per person, double occupancy); a spa with a sauna, massage therapists, and aestheticians; a gym and heated indoor pool; an

OLIVIER BLAUD

Le Commandant Charcot, *the world's only luxury icebreaker, navigating through the frozen terrain on the way to the North Pole.*

A scientist and a passenger test the ice.

observation lounge with Swarovski binoculars for scanning the horizon; a 270-seat multimedia theater; bars, both traditional and the juice variety; a cigar and Cognac room; and full access to the bridge. The primary restaurant, Nuna (Inuit for "earth"), the first effort at sea from three-Michelin-starred chef Alain Ducasse, has nine wine cellars among its extensive facilities and receives monthly shipments of caviar, foie gras, and other delicacies from France.

Ponant designed *Charcot* to out-luxe every other vessel in its fleet, then delivered the ultimate cherry on top: the ability to reach places inaccessible to any other cruise ship. It's a poster child of future tech, with dual fuel sources—liquefied natural gas and low-sulfur diesel—for eco-consciousness, massive banks of batteries for full electric power, and two giant Azipods at the vessel's rear for steering and propulsion. The boat weighs more than 70 million pounds, or 35,000 tons, enabling it to break ice floes like "a chocolate bar into little pieces, rather than slice through them," according to Captain Patrick Marchesseau. Twenty-foot-wide stainless-steel propellers, he adds, were designed to "chew ice like a blender."

Marchesseau, a tall, lanky, 40-ish mariner from Brittany, impeccable in his navy uniform but rocking royal-blue boat shoes, proves to be a charming host. Never short of a good quip, he's one of three experienced ice captains who alternate at the helm of *Charcot* throughout the year. He began piloting Ponant ships through drifting ice floes in Antarctica in 2009, when he took the helm of *Le Diamant,* Ponant's first expedition vessel. "An epic introduction," Marchesseau calls those early voyages, but the isolated, icebound North Pole aboard a larger, more complicated vessel is potentially an even thornier challenge. "We'll first sail east where the ice is less concentrated and then enter the pack at 81 degrees," he tells a lecture hall filled with passengers on day one. "We don't plan to stop until we get to the North Pole."

Around us, the majority of the other 101 guests are older French couples; there are also a few extended families, some other Europeans, mostly German and Dutch, as well as 10 Americans. Among the supporting cast are 6 research scientists and 221 staff, including 18 naturalist guides from a variety of countries.

The first six days are more about the journey than the destination. Cathy and I settle into our comfortable stateroom, enjoy the ocean views from our balcony, make friends with other guests and naturalists, frequent the spa, and indulge in the contemporary French cuisine at Nuna, which is often jarred by ice passing under the hull, as well as at the more casual Sila (Inuit for "sky"). There are the usual cruise events: the officers' gala, wine pairings, daily French pastries, Broadway-style shows, opera singers, and concert pianists. Initially, I worry about "Groundhog Day" setting in, but once we hit patchy ice floes on day two, it's clear that the polar party is on. The next day, we're ensconced in the ice pack.

Veterans of Arctic journeys immediately feel at home. Ferreira, often found on the observation deck 45 feet above the ice with his long-lensed cameras, is in his element snapping different patterns and colors of the frozen scape. "It feels like combining low-level flying with an out-of-body experience," he says. "Whenever the hull shudders against the ice, I have a reality check."

"I came back because I love this ice," adds Coloradan Gin Millsap, who with her husband, Jim, visited the North Pole in 2015 aboard the Russian nuclear icebreaker *Fifty Years of Victory,* which for obvious reasons is no longer a viable option for Americans and many Europeans. "I love the peace, beauty, and calmness."

It is easy to bliss out on the endless barren landscape, constantly morphing into new

MORGANE MONNERET. POLAR BEAR: VICKI BEAVER. WALRUS: ALBERT MICHAUD. PUFFIN: MORGANE MONNERET

shapes, contours, and shades of white as the weather moves from bright sunshine to howling snowstorms—sometimes within the course of a few hours. I spend a lot of time on the cold, windswept bow, looking at the snow patterns, ridges, and rivers flowing within the pale landscape as the boat crunches through the ice. It feels like being in a black-and-white movie, with no colors except the turquoise bottoms of ice blocks overturned by the boat. Beautiful, lonely, mesmerizing.

Rather than a solid landmass, the Arctic ice pack is actually millions of square miles of ice floes, slowly pushed around by wind and current. The size varies according to season: This past winter, the ice was at its fifth-lowest level on record, encompassing 5.64 million square miles, while during our cruise it was 1.8 million square miles, the 10th-lowest summer number on record. There are myriad ice types—young ice, pancake ice, ice cake, brash ice, fast ice—but the two that our ice pilot, Geir-Martin Leinebø, cares about are first-year ice and old ice. The thinness of the former provides the ideal route to the pole, while the denseness of the aged variety can result in 10-to-25-foot-high ridges that are potentially impassable. Leinebø is no novice: In his day job, he's the captain of Norway's naval icebreaker, *KV Svalbard,* the first Norwegian vessel to reach the North Pole, in 2019.

It's not a matter of just pointing the boat due north and firing up the engine. Leinebø zigzags through the floes. A morning satellite feed and special software aid in determining the best route; the ship's helicopter sometimes scouts 40 or so miles ahead, and there's a sonar called the Sea Ice Monitoring System (SIMS). But mostly Leinebø uses his eyes. "You look for the weakest parts of the ice—you avoid the ridges because that means thickness and instead look for water," he says. "If the 'water sky' in the distance is dark, it's reflecting water like a mirror, so you head in that direction."

Everyone on the bridge is surprised by the lack of multi-year ice, but with more than a hint of disquietude. Though we don't have to ram our way through frozen ridges, the advance of climate change couldn't be more apparent. Environmentalists call the Arctic ice sheet the canary in the coal mine of the planet's climate change for good reason: It is happening here first. "It's not right," mutters Leinebø. "There's just too much open water for July. Really scary."

The Arctic ice sheet has shrunk to about half its 1985 size, and as both mariners and scientists on board note, the quality of the ice is deteriorating. "It's happening faster than our models predicted," says Marisol Maddox, senior arctic analyst at the Polar Institute of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. "We're seeing major events like Greenland's ice sheet melting and sliding into the ocean—that wasn't forecasted until 2070." The general consensus had been that the Arctic would be ice-free by 2050, but many scientists now expect that day to come in the 2030s.

That deterioration, it turns out, is why the three teams of scientists are on the voyage—two studying the ice and the other assessing climate change's impact on plankton. As part of its commitment to sustainability, Ponant has designed two research labs—one wet and one dry—on a lower deck. "We took the advice of many scientists for equipping these labs," says Hugues Decamus, *Charcot*'s chief engineer, clearly proud of the nearly $12 million facilities.

CLOCKWISE FROM BELOW: *An Atlantic puffin, typically spotted along the coast of Svalbard, Norway; walruses en route; a polar bear, the Arctic's most feared predator.*

> "We're seeing major events like Greenland's ice sheet melting and sliding into the ocean—that wasn't forecasted until 2070."

Birds take flight as passengers explore on a Zodiac excursion.

MORGANE MONNERET

The combined size of the labs, along with a sonar room, a dedicated server for the scientists, and a meteorological station on the vessel's top deck, totals 1,400 square feet—space that could have been used for revenue generation. Ponant also has two staterooms reserved for scientists on each voyage and provides grants for travel expenses. The line doesn't cherry-pick researchers but instead asks the independent Arctic Research Icebreaker Consortium (ARICE) to choose participants based on submissions.

The idea, says the vessel's science officer on this voyage, Daphné Buiron, is to make the process transparent and minimize the appearance of greenwashing. "Yes, this alliance may deliver a positive public image for the company, but this ship shows we do real science on board," she says. The labs will improve over time, adds Decamus, as the ship amasses more sophisticated equipment.

Research scientists and tourist vessels don't typically mix. The former, wary of becoming mascots for the cruise lines' sustainability marketing efforts, and cognizant of the less-than-pristine footprint of many vessels, tend to be wary. The cruise lines, for their part, see scientists as potentially high maintenance when paying customers should be the priority. But there seemed to be a meeting of the minds, or at least a détente, on *Le Commandant Charcot*.

"We discuss this a lot and are aware of the downsides, but also the positives," says Franz von Bock und Polach, head of the institute for ship structural design and analysis at Hamburg University of Technology, specializing in the physics of sea ice. Not only does *Charcot* grant free access to these remote areas, but the ship will also collect data on the same route multiple times a year with equipment his team leaves on board, offering what scientists prize most: repeatability. "One transit doesn't have much value," he says. "But when you measure different seasons, regions, and years, you build up a more complex picture." So, more than just a research paper: forecasts of ice conditions for long-term planning by governments as the Arctic transforms.

Nils Haëntjens, from the University of Maine, is analyzing five-milliliter drops of water on a high-tech McLane IFCB microscope. "The instrument captures more than 250,000 images of phytoplankton along the latitudinal transect," he says. *Charcot* has doors in the wet lab that allow the scientists to take water samples, and in the bow, inlets take in water without contaminating it. Two freezers can preserve samples for further research back in university labs.

Even though the boat won't stop, the captain and chief engineer clearly want to make the science missions work. Marchesseau dispatches the helicopter with the researchers and their gear 60 miles ahead, where they take core samples and measurements. I spot them in their red snowsuits, pulling sleds on an ice floe, as the boat passes. Startled to see living-color humans on the ice after days of monochrome, I feel a pang of jealousy as I head for a caviar tasting.

The only other humans we encounter on the journey north are aboard *Fifty Years of Victory*, the Russian icebreaker. The 524-foot orange-and-black leviathan reached the North Pole a day earlier—its 59th visit—and is on its way back to Murmansk. It's a classic East meets West moment: the icebreaker, launched just after the collapse of the Soviet Union, meeting the new standard of polar luxury.

The evening before Bastille Day, *Le Commandant Charcot* arrives at the North Pole. Because of the pinpoint precision of the GPS, Marchesseau has to navigate back and forth for about 20 minutes—with a bridge full of passengers hushing each other so as not to distract him—until he finds 90 degrees north. That final chaotic approach to the top of the world in the gray, windswept landscape looks like a kid's Etch a Sketch on the chartplotter, but it is met with rousing cheers. The next morning, with good visibility and light winds, we spill out onto the ice for the celebration, followed by a polar plunge.

As guests pose in front of flags and mile markers for major cities, the naturalist guides, armed with rifles, establish a wide perimeter to guard against polar bears. The fearless creatures are highly intelligent, with razor-sharp teeth, hooked claws, and the ability to sprint at 25 mph. Males average about 10 feet tall and weigh around 1,500 pounds. They are loners that will kill anything—including other bears and even their own cubs. Cathy and I walk around the far edges of the perimeter to enjoy some solitude. Looking out over the white landscape, I know this is a milestone. But it feels odd that getting here didn't involve any sweat or even a modicum of discomfort.

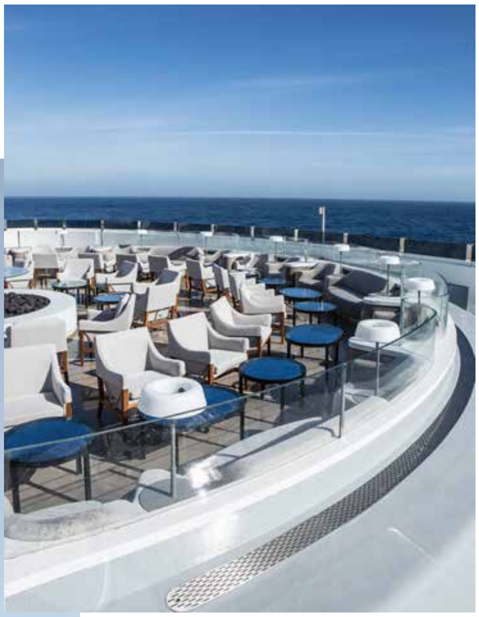
The rest of the week is an entirely different trip. On the return south, we see a huge male polar bear ambling on the ice, looking over his shoulder at us. It is our first sighting of the Arctic's apex predator, and everyone crowds the observation lounge with long-lensed cameras. The next day, we see another male, this one smaller, running away from the ship. "They have many personalities," says Steiner Aksnes, head of the expedition team, who has led scientists and film crews in the Arctic for 25 years. We see a dozen on the return to Svalbard, where 3,000 are scattered across the archipelago, outnumbering human residents.

The last five days we make six stops on different islands, traveling by Zodiac from *Charcot* to various beaches. On Lomfjorden, as we look on a hundred yards from shore, a mother polar bear protects her two cubs while a young male hovers in the background. On a Zodiac ride off Alkefjellet, the air is alive with birds, including tens of thousands of Brünnich's guillemots as well as glaucous gulls and kittiwakes, which nest in that island's cliffs, while a young male polar bear munches on a ring seal, chin glistening red.

On this part of the trip, the expedition team, mostly 30-something, free-spirited scientists whose areas of expertise range from botany to alpine trekking to whales, lead hikes across different landscapes. The jam-packed schedule sometimes involves three activities per day and includes following the reindeer on Palanderbukta, seeing a colony of 200 walruses on Kapp Lee, hiking the black tundra of Burgerbukta (boasting one-half-inch-tall willows—said to be the smallest trees in the world and the largest on Svalbard—plus mosquitoes!), watching multiple species of whales breaching offshore, and kayaking the ice floes of Ekmanfjorden. Svalbard is a protected wilderness area, and the cruise lines tailor their schedules so vessels don't overlap, giving visitors the impression they are setting foot on virgin land.

Chances to experience that sense of discovery and wonder, even slightly stage-managed ones, are dwindling along with the ice sheet and endangered wildlife. If a stunning trip to a frozen North Pole is on your bucket list, the time to go is now. ●

CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: *Kayaking around an ice floe; Inneq, an open-air bar on the ship warmed by a fire pit; the bedroom of a suite, with sliding doors leading to a private terrace; the cigar lounge, which also serves specialty spirits.*



Looking out over the white landscape, I know this is a milestone. But it feels odd that getting here didn't involve any sweat or even a modicum of discomfort.

KAYAKS: JULIEN FABRO. INNEQ BAR, DETAIL AND SUITE: GILLES TRILLARD

PARADIGM SHIP

For those studying polar ice, a berth aboard *Le Commandant Charcot* is like a winning lottery ticket. "This cruise ship is one of the few resources scientists can use, because nothing else can get there," says G. Mark Miller, CEO of research-vessel builder Greenwater Marine Sciences Offshore (GMSO) and a former ship captain for the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). "Then factor in 80 percent of scientists who want to go to sea, can't, because of the shortage of research vessels."

Both Ponant and Viking have designed research labs aboard new expedition vessels as part of their sustainability initiatives. "Remote areas like Antarctica need more data—the typical research is just single data points," says Damon Stanwell-Smith, Ph.D., head of science and sustainability at Viking. "Every scientist says more information is needed."

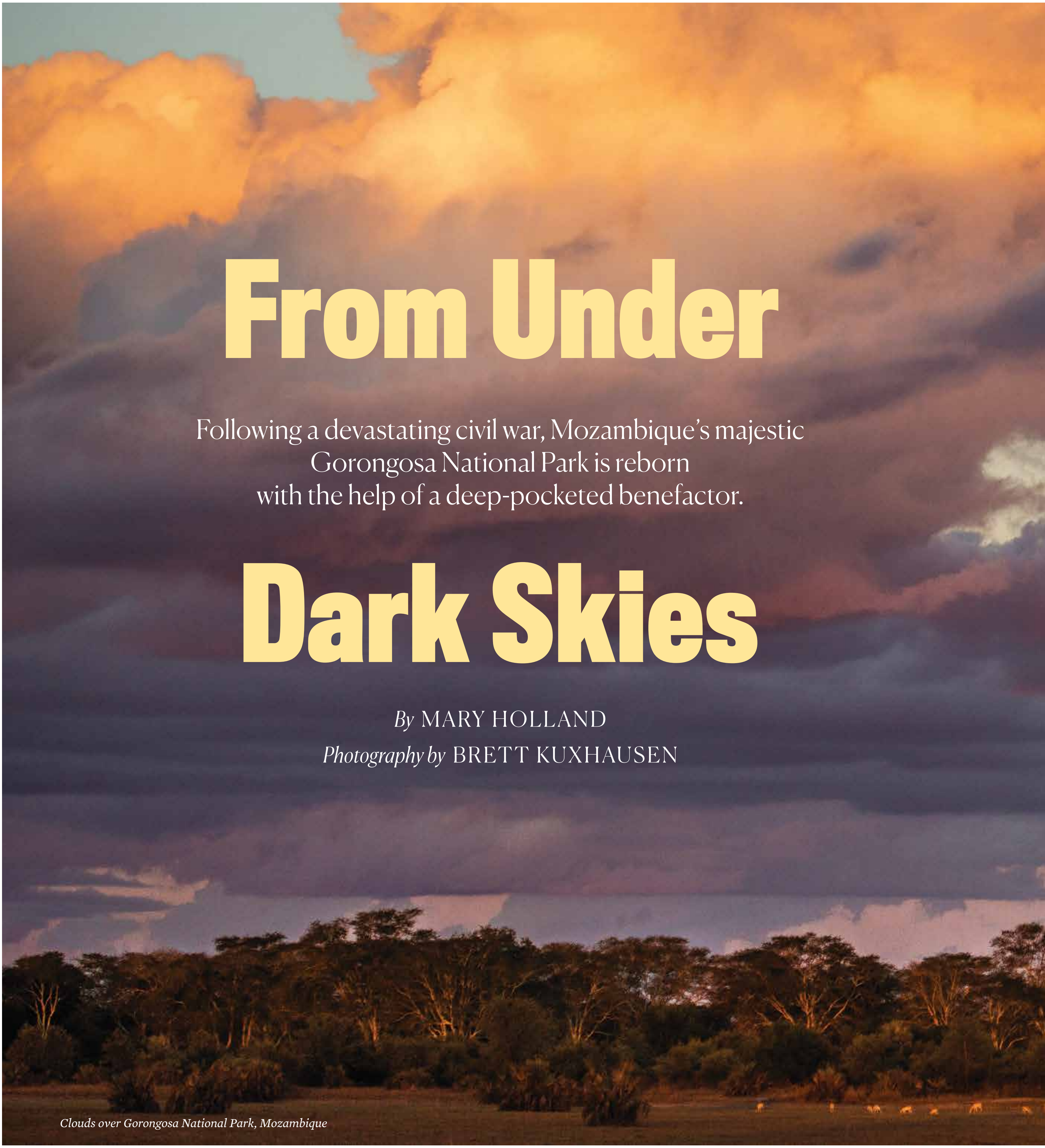
The twin sisterships *Viking Octantis* and *Viking Polaris*, which travel to Antarctica, Patagonia, the Great Lakes, and Canada, have identical 380-square-foot labs, separated into wet and dry areas and fitted out with research equipment. In hangars below are military-grade rigid-hulled inflatables and two six-person yellow submersibles (the pair on *Octantis* are named *John* and *Paul*, while *Polaris*'s are *George* and *Ringo*). Unlike Ponant, Viking doesn't have an independent association choose scientists for each voyage. Instead, it partners with the University of Cambridge, the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, and NOAA, which send their researchers to work with Viking's onboard science officers.

"Some people think marine research is sticking some kids on a ship to take measurements," says Stanwell-Smith. "But we know we can do first-rate science—not spin."

Other cruise lines are also embracing sustainability initiatives, with coral-reef-restoration projects and water-quality measurements, usually in partnership with universities. Just about every vessel has "citizen-scientist" research programs allowing guests the opportunity to count birds or pick up discarded plastic on beaches.

So far, Ponant and Viking are the only lines with serious research labs. Ponant is adding science officers to other vessels in its fleet. As part of the initiatives, scientists deliver onboard lectures and sometimes invite passengers to assist in their research.

Given the shortage of research vessels, Stanwell-Smith thinks this passenger-funded system will coexist nicely with current NGO- and government-owned ships. "This could be a new paradigm for exploring the sea," he says. "Maybe the next generation of research vessels will look like ours." **M.V.**



From Under Dark Skies

Following a devastating civil war, Mozambique's majestic Gorongosa National Park is reborn with the help of a deep-pocketed benefactor.

By MARY HOLLAND

Photography by BRETT KUXHAUSEN

Clouds over Gorongosa National Park, Mozambique

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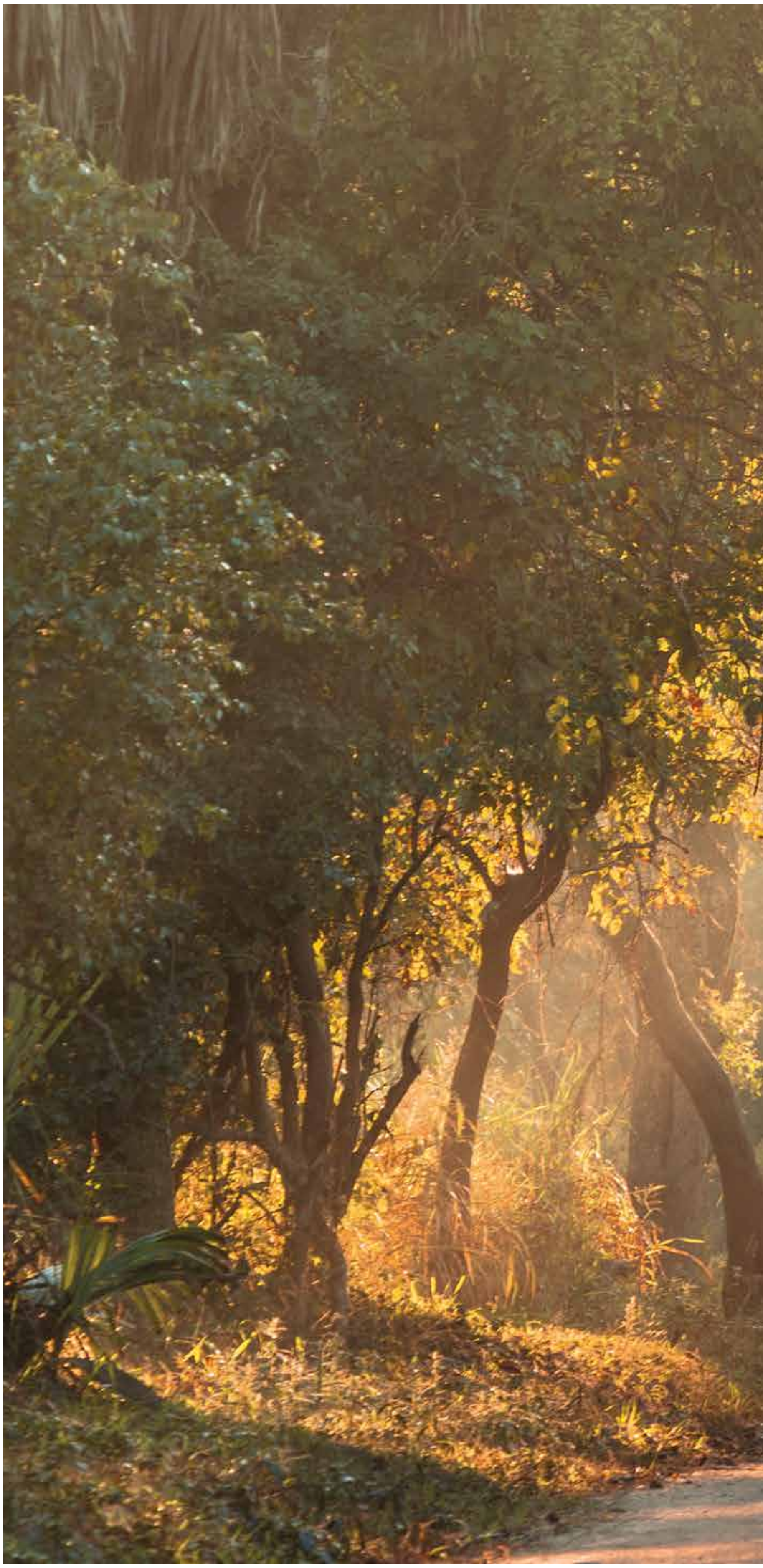
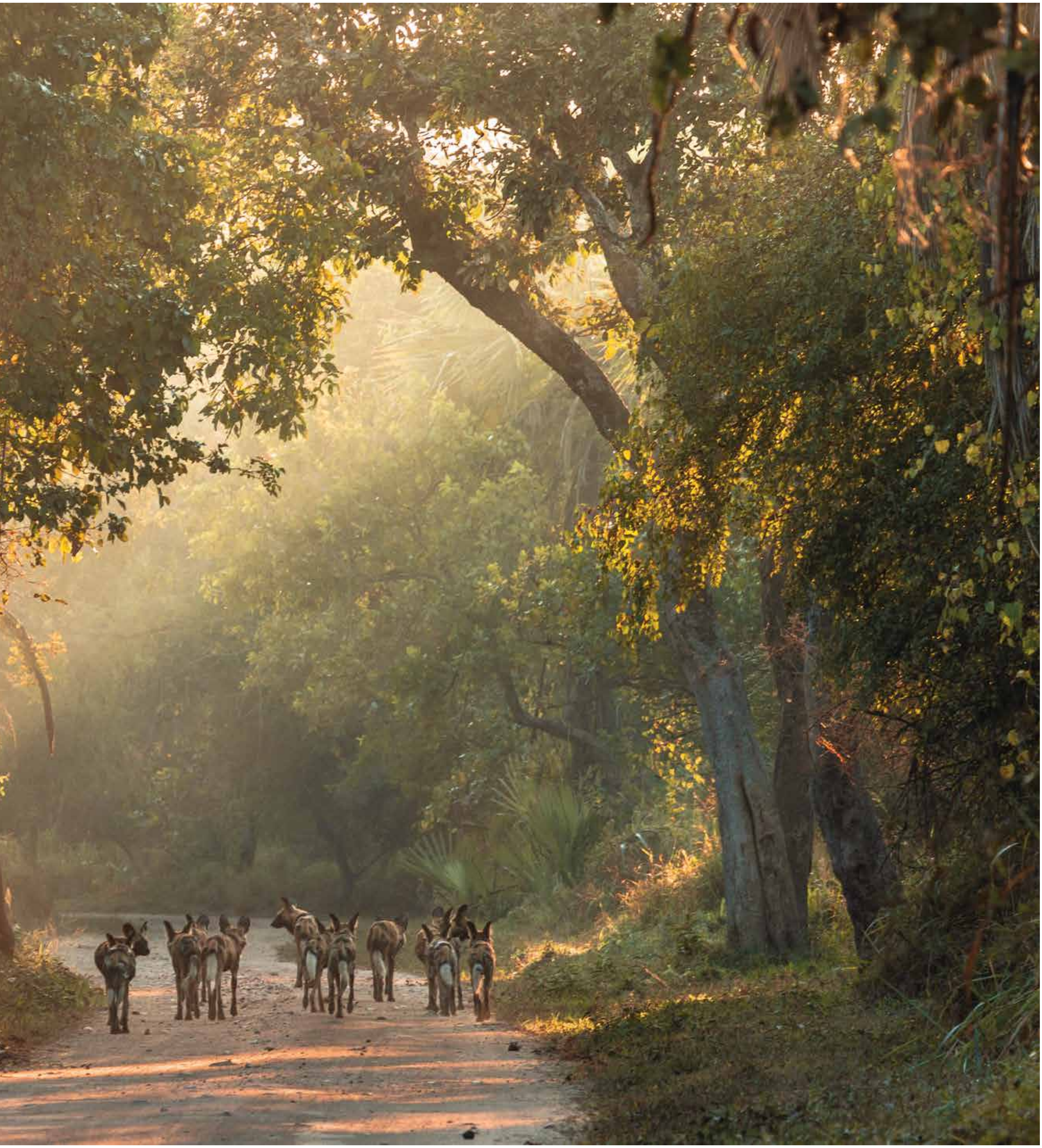
The first time Greg Carr visited Mozambique's Gorongosa National Park, in March 2004, he left a message in the visitor's ledger, unaware the brief missive would prove prophetic—or that he would play a crucial part in its fulfilment. In the slim, faded black book from the early 2000s, among comments spaced months apart—a sign of the dismal tourism numbers—he wrote: "This is a spectacular park and it could become one of the best in Africa with some assistance. Greg Carr."

Almost two decades later, his encouraging words in the guest book have begun to ring true. Only an eternal optimist could have written such a positive assessment of a place that had been all but abandoned, where the most visible signs of animal life were swarms of mosquitoes. Gorongosa, sprawling across more than 1,500 square miles at the southern point of the Great Rift Valley, in the central part of the country, was once an illustrious swath of land with a richly biodiverse terrain bursting with wildlife. It drew the likes of John Wayne, astronauts, and other high-profile guests and was considered among the greatest reserves in Africa. Portuguese promotional videos from the '60s and '70s advertise guests cruising through the bush in groovy VW microbuses and sitting beside a glimmering swimming pool at Chitengo Camp. That was all before the 16-year-long civil war, a devastating and complicated conflict that erupted after independence was won from the Portuguese in 1976. One million people were killed, and the park became a battlefield that decimated the wildlife population. Some animals were slaughtered for bush meat, others for their valuable horns or tusks.

When Carr, now 63, first visited—after receiving an invitation from the Mozambican ambassador to the United Nations, who hoped that he would provide aid to the country—the war had officially ended, but instability remained. Carr was already involved in philanthropy: After making his fortune selling voice mail systems to telephone companies, he devoted himself to humanitarian activities and in 1998 created the Carr Foundation, dedicated to human rights, the environment, and the arts. He didn't know much about Mozambique, other than some crib notes he'd made after a cursory Google search, but he was curious about the ambassador's proposition.



A pack of African wild dogs roaming the park



Today, thanks to roughly $100 million of his personal funds and the expertise of a 900-member-strong team, the Gorongosa Restoration Project is in full swing. The strategy to restore this national park is holistic and encompasses everything from advanced ecological and biological research to building schools, supporting farmers, reintroducing wildlife, and reforesting the land. Though Carr has been instrumental in this vision, when I meet him on a scorching February day in Gorongosa, he jokes that he's just a tourist here. "This is their country," he tells me. "This is their national park."

Setbacks, including the war and ongoing skirmishes with area rebels, a major cyclone, and then Covid, mean the region has suffered more than most, but now it has reached a pivotal point. "It's an amazing beacon in a really difficult area of Africa," says Will Bolsover, founder and CEO of Natural World Safaris, who is planning on bringing in guests in 2024. This year, the park will unveil a stunning second lodge, Muzimu, a high-end tented camp with six smart suites overlooking the bush. Community initiatives are soaring: More people have access to clean drinking water than ever, beehives and silos are being distributed, and hundreds of people are producing coffee. For a place that lost 90 percent of its wildlife population, the herd numbers are staggering. Over the past 20 years, animals have been purchased from South Africa, among other countries, and slowly reintroduced through a careful strategy developed by a team of veterinarians and ecologists. The support of nearly 300 park rangers eases poaching concerns and lets natural reproduction freely run its course.

During an aerial count in 2022, rangers identified over 102,000 animals. The buffalo tally was up from 56 in 2006 to 1,400, and there were some 193 lions. Hyenas and jackals are the latest additions. While some species have been less successful (namely cheetahs), others, such as the

"The problem with people trying to get themselves out of poverty is they don't own their land."

endangered African wild dog, have thrived. A pack was reintroduced in 2018, and the animals now total about 150. During my five-day visit, I saw three different packs, which are notoriously elusive; one made a kill right in front of me.

The numbers of leopards, lions, and other high-profile game don't compare to those of the continent's most popular tourist draws, such as Kruger National Park (7,523 square miles) in South Africa or its neighbor the Sabi Sands, where leopards basically fall from trees. But during Gorongosa's dry season (April to October), you won't struggle to find land animals or birds: There are over 465 species of

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: *Coffee farming on Mount Gorongosa; a hippo in the park; Greg Carr; the new Muzimu tented camp.*

the latter. Head guide and activities manager Test Malunga—who has been in Gorongosa for six years and has worked in South Africa and all over his native Zimbabwe (a country known for its expert guides)—doesn't think this disparity will deter guests. "Lions, wild dogs, and buffalo are not hard to find," says Malunga, adding that "you can't beat the landscape here." The exclusivity of game viewing is also unrivaled. Unlike the frequent traffic jams of safari Land Rovers in, say, Kenya's Masai Mara, "you won't see another vehicle the whole day you're driving around."

Describing his decision to plow an initial $36 million into Gorongosa, Carr makes it sound easier than picking out a tie in the morning. When he visited the once-shiny Chitengo Camp, rusty shells of VW buses littered the grounds, old landmines were still buried in the soil, and dilapidated building walls were graffitied with images of guns. Surrounding communities had been destroyed, and people were dressed in shreds of clothes. "There was nothing but mosquitoes!" says Vasco Galante, director of communications for Gorongosa National Park, who has been working with Carr since 2005. On his first flight over the park, Carr was struck by this deserted wilderness, which appeared to go on forever. He saw not just a breeding ground for insects but the fundamentals of an ecosystem that he believed could thrive once again. "I'm not a biologist, but I knew enough that if the ecosystem was intact, you could easily bring back the wildlife," he says. So he flew to the capital city of Maputo and set up meetings. "I said, 'Let's do this thing. Let's restore your park.' "

But from the get-go, Carr insisted on collaborating rather than simply handing over money to the government. It took him three years to hash out the details of the initial public-private agreement with Mozambican officials, which allowed the Carr Foundation to jointly administer Gorongosa National Park. A 20-year contract was signed in 2008, and, in 2018, it was extended to 2043. The nonprofit pledged to funnel any proceeds back into the project.

"There aren't many places in Africa where you can pretty much have the park to yourself."

So what's a guy from Idaho doing meddling in a park thousands of miles away from home? "I'm addicted to Africa," Carr confesses. "There's a line that I heard someone else say, so I'm stealing it, but I love it anyway: 'If you can go to two continents, go to Africa twice.' " He has never considered himself a conservationist, but rather someone who is interested in human development. On his first flight to Mozambique, he read a book by the prominent economist Hernando de Soto about land tenure in the developing world and how important it is that everyone can own their own property. "The problem with people trying to get themselves out of poverty is they don't own their land," says Carr, who has made it part of his mission to help locals secure land rights. "It has always been a goal of mine," he adds. Putting people first—by generating jobs, incomes, land ownership, and a sustainable supply chain—was something that won over his dubious colleagues when he started out. "He struck me as sincere and honest. He has the heart, he's compassionate, he's committed," says Galante, who was understandably skeptical of Carr when he first appeared with tens of millions of dollars to spend on a war-torn slice of land. Who wouldn't be?

To comprehend all the progress that has been made here, you have to visit a part of the area that was once the most troubled: Mount Gorongosa. A lone mountain, it was turbulent in the 2010s, when rebels infiltrated, but is thriving today. Though a section of the mountain has now been declared part of the national park, to get there, you have to exit the main park and zigzag along the national highway, which stretches all the way south to Maputo and north to Tanzania. For years, this risky road, where violence still erupted, was devoid of vehicles except for the odd military convoy. But today, buses and cars fly past, navigating potholes the size of craters at lightning speed. (Galante shares a photo of a pothole so deep, ducks were swimming in it.) The challenging infrastructure that Mozambicans face every day contrasts starkly with what you see inside the park, where things appear relatively orderly. The highway passes through Vila da Gorongosa, the main town on the edge of the park, which is alive with people pumping music from giant speakers on the roadside and Saturday-afternoon market vendors selling everything from charcoal to clothing. Queues snake outside the bank and the clinic—recent additions to a town once devastated by the war. Turning onto a dirt road, we wind through tall grass and fields of maize and cassava. On a rainy day (like the day we visit), it's almost impossible to navigate. We skid through mud as sweat drips from our expert driver's brow.

When we reach approximately 2,000 feet above sea level, we see the first coffee plants, with plump red berries dangling from their stalks. The small trees, which look so innocuous, have in fact become a lifeline. Not only have they helped reforest the area by growing in tandem with indigenous species and forming a tree canopy, which encourages soil fertility, but they're also creating a vital economy: The beans are farmed by local producers, roasted with equipment imported from Colombia, then exported. "The coffee is a way to protect the mountain," says Pedro Muagura, the park warden (whom Carr affectionately calls his boss). When I ask Muagura why he decided to join the team, he tells me it took him six years to agree to the position. "Every year they asked me to join, and every year I said no," explains Muagura, who had been working as a teacher at the time, bringing in kids to observe the animals. Though he had a deep love for the park (and was actually chased off the mountain by the rebels in 2013), he was skeptical. "I wanted to know his intentions," he says of Carr. When Muagura flew over the park with Carr and Galante and saw how the forests were being slashed and burned, he immediately changed his mind. "I don't remember it, but they told me I was crying," says Muagura, who studied forestry and has an affinity for plants.

I follow him along a narrow mountain path as he collects seeds and fruits that he'll germinate later. When we get to a waterfall crossing, he stops and contemplates how to traverse it. Stones have been laid out to form a bridge, and a rope is strung between two trees on either side, so we grab hold and navigate across the gushing water. On the other side lies what could be considered the future of the mountain: a nursery filled with neat rows of indigenous saplings, including mahogany and panga panga, as well as varieties of coffee plants, which will all be cultivated beneath the shady tree canopy. This is Muagura's sanctuary and part of the greater plan for the park: to reforest as much, and as quickly, as possible. "We are trying to create resilience," he says, pointing to a collection of coffee saplings composed of seven new species from Brazil. Even though the plants aren't native, they grow relatively quickly, creating more biodiversity and a welcoming environment for birds and other species while allowing farmers to generate income in a rural area. New producers are

Among the wildlife now thriving in the park are antelope and elephants.

joining all the time; by December 2022, there were over 800. Muagura stops, smiles, and listens to the birds chirping. "You couldn't hear them before," he says. "Thanks to the reforestation," he continues, "they're coming back."

Much else is coming back to Gorongosa, including sustainable income for many locals. Gaining land rights for farmers who live on the edge of the park, in what they call the buffer zone, is one of Carr's biggest objectives. Looking back, he wishes he'd focused on crops earlier. "If I could go back and talk to Greg who wrote in that book in 2004, I would say to him, 'Start agriculture sooner,' " says Carr. But at the time, his focus was on bringing in rangers and eliminating poaching.

It is the day after I'd visited the mountain, a Sunday afternoon, and we're sitting inside the living room of Carr's new house, which was recently built near Chitengo Camp. Though it is a simple structure with a modest kitchen and living room, it is a huge upgrade from his former home here: a tent with no air-conditioning. When I arrived, he was knee-deep in paperwork—dressed in a Gorongosa T-shirt, his laptop under his arm. He had just eaten lunch with some team members, discussing various park strategies. A few days earlier, he'd flown in from Maputo, where he'd held several meetings trying to raise more funds. Carr clearly has a knack for drumming up donations—U.S. government aid has been approximately $50 million since 2008—and is an expert in patience. (He still goes through the visa process each time he visits Mozambique, which is every month or so.) "We have a lot of generous donors," he says. But there is always more to be done, and he's playing the long game. He has upped his monetary commitment in stages, investing an additional $5 million or $6 million into everything from human development to conservation, science, and tourism, every year since 2004. "I suppose I'll do it for another 20," he adds.

Carr rolls out a map onto his living room floor. At the top it reads "Gorongosa Project" and displays an overview of the park, from the wetlands and Lake Urema to Gorongosa HQ and the buffer zones. "I've always been a practical person, more than a theoretical person," he says. "For me, it's about going and doing it; talk is cheap." He points to markers on the map, adding, "Every one of these is a school. I think there's 100 on here. That's about 40,000 children." This year, the Gorongosa Project is building another 17 schools and training 600 teachers, as well as helping thousands of farmers. Another of Carr's passions is the Girl's Club, an extracurricular program to empower young girls and keep them in school; currently, many marry and become pregnant by the age of 18. In addition, there's the E. O. Wilson Biodiversity Laboratory, which was founded by the Gorongosa Project and inaugurated by the great American biologist and naturalist who had an affinity for the area. Scientists from around the world visit the lab to conduct research.

In the next couple of years, Carr aims to expand tourism and perhaps open a few more lodges like the for-profit Muzimu, owned by the Gorongosa Project, including one on the mountain. Maybe other tourism brands, which have been hesitant in the past, will invest too, especially as wildlife numbers rise. "The more stakeholders we have, the more resilient the system," says Carr. But he can't hang around and wait for others to make up their minds about Mozambique; there's too much to be done. He's hopeful that the right tourists will rediscover the park. Not only does Gorongosa offer a safari experience, but there are also magnificent limestone gorges and waterfalls to explore, labs to tour, and communities to visit. "There aren't many places in Africa where you can pretty much have the park to yourself," says Bolsover, of Natural World Safaris. "People who want to visit Gorongosa are prepared to put in the effort to travel and spend time on the ground," he adds. "It's about slow travel. They're coming for the greater story; it builds and grows on you."

I ask Carr if he'd ever consider restoring another public park elsewhere, and he is quick to respond. "It's about doing more things here," he says. It's clear that Gorongosa is his life's work: The plan is never to stop advancing—in everything from science and education to conservation, farming, health care, and wildlife. He contemplates which animals he'd personally like to see reintroduced to the park. He'd love to have more zebras, though he knows the scientists would probably argue that more carnivores are needed first to balance the herbivores. "But we could get some," he says with a grin, then takes on a more serious tone. The animal he ultimately hopes to welcome to Gorongosa is endangered and high in value. Introducing it into such a fragile place right now could potentially kick-start another war. "I think before I leave here we have to bring in rhino," he says. Rhino poaching in Africa is rampant—a tempting trade for impoverished, vulnerable communities that has devastated many regions in Africa. "It has to be our final thing." As contentious as that may sound at this moment, when you look at all that has been achieved here, perhaps it's entirely possible. ●

ASTON MARTIN

LIVIN' LA VIDA

LOGO

Just as they boost the status—and prices—of cars, clothes, and jewelry, brand names are giving prime real estate a new level of street cred.

By **David Kaufman** and **Abigail Montanez**

FOUR SEASONS

ARMANI / CASA

W

When the Sherry-Netherland apartment hotel debuted on New York's Fifth Avenue in 1927, it had the distinction of being the world's first "branded" residence, in this case leveraging the reputation of Sherry's, a popular restaurant that had operated about 15 blocks south until the early days of Prohibition. With a Gothic minaret, a vaulted lobby that nodded to the Vatican library, and each of the top 14 floors a single, elegant apartment, the property quickly made an impact in the realm of posh real estate.

Nearly a century later, the category is surging—up some 150 percent over the past decade, according to London-based commercial-real-estate brokerage Savills. Today, real-estate design firm and consultancy WATG Strategy says there are over 700 branded residential developments, with upwards of 100,000 total homes either completed or in the planning stages, around the globe. And Savills predicts that the sector will double in size by 2027, fueled by a surge of prospective buyers in both established locations—New York, Miami, London, Dubai—and emerging markets as varied as Oman, Poland, and Guyana.

What has changed in recent years—other than the sheer number of entrants into this increasingly lucrative sector, particularly at the luxury end of the spectrum—is the breadth of brands that want in on the action. The hotel companies that pioneered the concept are now joined by fashion and jewelry houses including Armani, Roberto Cavalli, Fendi, and Bulgari, as well as car marques such as Porsche, Bentley, and Aston Martin. Chris Graham, founder of Graham Associates, a leading consultancy in the field, calls a home with any of these designer labels a

The right moniker can add upwards of 30 percent to a project's sales price. "But, just as importantly, partnering with the right brand can vastly improve the speed and certainty of sales."

The Bulgari Lighthouse, the Italian jeweler's latest project in partnership with Dubai developer Meraas, is under construction on the city's Jumeirah Bay Island.

"trophy purchase." He tells *Robb Report*, "People are quite keen on living there. It's quite a badge of status."

For the consumer companies and the real-estate developers alike, such partnerships are win-win. Brand names with cachet can translate to premiums on high-end real-estate developments, even in the most competitive markets. Though variables such as location and a hotel component (or not) play a part, analysts suggest that when executed effectively—which means doing quite a bit more than merely slapping a familiar logo on sales materials—the right moniker can add upwards of 30 percent to a project's sales price.

"The exact figure is always difficult to quantify and depends on a wide array of factors, but the premiums [that] brands add are very, very real," says Edgardo Defortuna, president, CEO, and founder of Miami-based Fortune International Group, which has developed residences with Ritz-Carlton, St. Regis, and Auberge. "But, just as importantly, partnering with the right brand can vastly improve the speed and certainty of sales."

Historically, hotel companies have been most likely to develop branded properties, with hospitality firms comprising some 84 percent of the sector, according to Savills. Which makes sense: Hoteliers already possess the know-how to both develop *and* operate properties—and what are residences, really, other than long-stay versions of short-stay hotel rooms?

"This is one of the reasons hotels have done so well," says Liam Bailey, global head of research at Knight Frank in London. "They can point to a clear track record of delivering complex real-estate projects that successfully level their heritage and expertise."

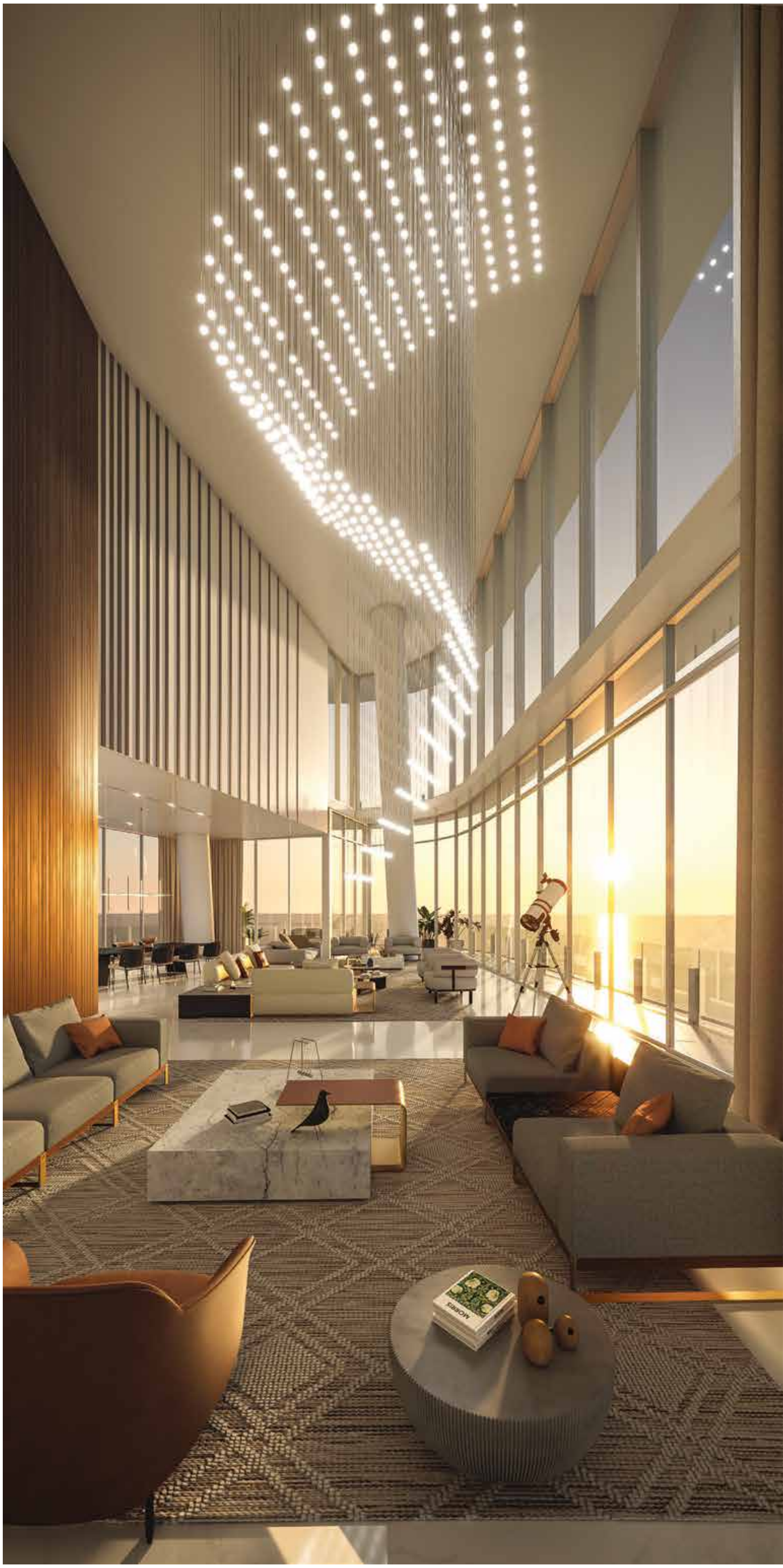
That organic evolution has hospitality brands continuing to flock to real estate. Peninsula, for instance, just entered the arena with the recently opened Peninsula Residences London, where a penthouse reportedly sold for about $123 million to U.S. hedge-fund mogul Ken Griffin. Aman, meanwhile, still a relatively modest-sized hospitality brand, reported

$2.4 billion in sales of its branded residences in 2022 alone. Rob Sykes, associate vice president and director of strategy at WATG, says that Six Senses, Equinox, and Faena—the last of which recently became part of Accor's expansive portfolio—are additional hotel names to watch for growth in the category.

Six Senses CEO Neil Jacobs describes such projects as contributing to both financial and marketing goals, noting that approximately 50 percent of the chain's new properties include residences. "Given the high costs of land today, having a residential component alongside the hotel helps justify the commercial viability of an entire development," he says. "The branded-residence business was an immediate goal from the moment we bought the business in 2012. They are, in a sense, the most cohesive way to reflect the sense of community that we are trying to achieve as a company."

Then there's Mandarin Oriental, which has also made notable moves, launching its first residence-only properties in Barcelona and Tel Aviv. Marriott's Edition is embracing the same approach, with the announcement, last year, of residence-only developments in Fort Lauderdale and Miami. Josh Fluhr, Edition's senior vice president and global managing director, says such developments are the "ultimate proof point" of a hotel brand's ability to succeed in the prime-property marketplace. South Florida, he notes, was the logical location for Edition's first condo-only projects, thanks to its critical mass of deep-pocketed international buyers. But Sykes cautions that the shift to hotel-branded residences *without actual hotels* can be risky—and costly: Five-star services and amenities must be provided solely for residents, which can translate into higher maintenance fees.

BELOW: An Aston Martin Vulcan earmarked for the buyer of a triplex penthouse at the company's Miami tower. RIGHT: A look inside that triplex.



“[Nobu] got it absolutely right. They sold out 300 apartments in six months—they went like hotcakes.”

The marketplace can be more challenging for newcomers from non-hospitality fields whose core businesses might not, at first glance, translate into obvious residential iterations. There’s blingy Jacob the Jeweler, for instance, who has partnered with UAE-based developer Binghatti to erect what they plan will be the world’s tallest tower in—where else?—Dubai. Or take Nobu and Casa Tua, posh sushi and Italian chains, respectively, which are converting their exclusive dining expertise into full-throttle lifestyle brands.

Graham, the consultant, says his initial reaction to Nobu’s venture, in Los Cabos, Mexico, was, “Why the hell would anyone want to live in a restaurant-led environment?” But he admits he has been proven wrong. “It’s been phenomenal. They got it absolutely right. They sold out 300 apartments in six months—they went like hotcakes.” Nobu, which, it should be noted, branched into hotels before diving into condos, has new real-estate projects underway in Toronto and Dubai.

With outposts around the globe, these brands have demonstrated a built-in customer base. But any name that comes from outside the traditional hotel arena “does demand additional layers of due diligence,” Knight Frank’s Bailey explains. “The key question buyers must ask,” he adds, “is, ‘Who is ultimately responsible for delivering the final real-estate product and services?’ ”

ABOVE: *The living area of a Nobu Toronto condo*

By any measure, Dubai has emerged as the global hub of branded residences. There are 42 such projects now in development in the desert emirate, in addition to the 71 already in place, all built since the Armani Hotel opened its doors in 2010 inside the soaring Burj Khalifa. Occupying the top floors were 144 Armani apartments, the very first branded homes in the city. Armani has since expanded to such far-flung locales as London, Beijing, Istanbul, Mumbai, Manila, and Tel Aviv. In Miami, the iconic Italian fashion house teamed with architect Cesar Pelli on a 56-story sail-inspired high-rise that opened in 2020, with furnishings and fixtures from Armani/Casa, its design studio. The house’s next undertaking: 19 apartments in a 97,000-square-foot tower above the Armani flagship on Madison Avenue in New York.

In Dubai, a city fueled by consumption, the highest-end brands appear to be winning. Names such as Four Seasons, Bulgari, Lamborghini, and Ritz-Carlton, which just launched its *fourth* venture, lead the Dubai market, where branded schemes fetch a 37 percent premium over their non-branded counterparts, according to a January report from Morgan’s International Realty. Prices per square foot rose 14 percent during the second half of 2022, the report continued, with the Bulgari Resort and Residences at the top of the market, attaining prices three times the sector average.

Before venturing into condos, the Roman jeweler built a reputation in hospitality, opening its first of many hotels in 2004, in Milan. “Bulgari-branded residences have been part of our strategy since the very beginning,” says Silvio Ursini, Bulgari group executive vice president. “The first sold were two penthouses in London in 2011.”

In the years since, the jewelry house has built an impressive portfolio that includes two luxury developments in Jumeirah Bay, one of Dubai’s prime neighborhoods. The first, Bulgari Resort and Residences, opened its doors in 2017; in addition to a splashy 101-room hotel, the property has 173 sea-facing apartments spread across six residential buildings, plus 15 private mansions. Last year, a three-bedroom unit reportedly closed for $10.9 million, or a record $3,450 per square foot. Ursini believes that consumers are willing to pay a premium when they’re attracted to the standards set by the company. “In our case, they are looking for a Bulgari-branded product, which

> “You can actually bring your car into your unit and see it from your kitchen or pool and enjoy the look of it.”

means the Italian design and furniture and the impeccable services delivered by the Bulgari Hotel,” he says.

Also in the pipeline is the Bulgari Lighthouse, a striking 27-story tower designed by architectural firm Antonio Citterio Patricia Viel, scheduled for completion in 2027. The project, located next to the resort’s yacht club, has already set a new mark for Dubai: A 38,970-square-foot penthouse reportedly sold for about $112 million in an off-plan deal earlier this year. The development will include 31 penthouses and a three-level Sky Villa. Going forward, a majority of the jeweler’s projects will include residences, Ursini says, noting, “they are very important because they add a sense of community.”

Dubai typifies the fundamentals now fueling the branded trend worldwide: It’s a booming tourism hub with a robust hotel sector, and it boasts sunny days when Europe and North America are snowed under. There’s also a highly international population with substantial liquid capital. When you’re an expat, familiar names can provide a level of trust and security, whether you’re shelling out for a pair of shoes or your living quarters.

“Branded residences offer buyers a sort of guarantee,” says Niall McLoughlin, senior vice president of marketing and corporate communications at Dubai property giant Damac, which has developed luxury residential projects with Versace and Fendi and has another underway with Mandarin Oriental, slated for completion in 2025. “They also offer developers an added layer of confidence owing to their established track record when it comes to being meticulous about quality and details.”

Meanwhile, in Miami—which, like Dubai, is a highly international city and, not coincidentally, ranked by Savills as the world’s second-most-buoyant locale for branded developments—the boom is equally eclectic, with names from nearly every realm of the luxury arena aggressively breaking ground. Of particular note are the clutch tied to high-end automobiles, including Bentley Residences, Aston Martin Residences, and the established Porsche Design Tower, famed for its futuristic “Dezervator” elevator, an invention of Dezer Development’s Gil Dezer that delivers residents—and their cars—directly next to their homes.

Porsche and Aston Martin, like the fashion houses, are playing to their super fans. At the latter’s 66-story waterfront high-rise under construction on Biscayne Boulevard downtown, only a few of the 391 units remain—one of which is a $59 million triplex penthouse that comes with a limited-edition Aston Martin Vulcan race car valued at $3.2 million. The 20,000-square-foot spread also includes a temperature-controlled garage located at the base of the building to store the vehicle. As a sweetener for other deals, buyers are being offered their choice of a DBX Riverwalk Edition or a DB11 V8 Coupe with the purchase of any of seven available penthouses or 38 “signature” condos.

The sailboat-shaped condominium, on track to be the tallest residential building south of New York and slated for completion this year, inaugurates the British automotive manufacturer’s foray into residential development. Cathal Loughnane, director of Aston Martin Partnerships, says the tower will carry the same aesthetic DNA and high level of craftsmanship that the marque’s fans expect of its performance cars. “This project is far more than just the use of the Aston Martin name,” he insists, adding that the company is designing the common areas and amenity spaces, from the fitness center and spa down to the reception desks in the two lobbies. “We design sports cars for those who appreciate automotive art. Working with creative teams outside of the automotive industry helps to broaden our designers’ vision.”

Loughnane notes that the design-centric nature of real estate makes for a natural fit. “It enables us to further enhance and grow the brand into new aspects of the luxury world that appeal to both our existing and future customers.”

Bentley is aiming for the latter with its first effort, which is set to open in 2026 and dovetails with the British marque’s strategy “to become an absolute reference in sustainable luxury,” according to Alain Favey, board member for sales and marketing. By 2030, he explains, “we’ll be selling 100 percent electric cars, so in that prospect, we need to reach a new kind of audience—people who might not be traditional Bentley owners and who are more progressive and interested in sustainability.

“At this moment, we have no electric cars to sell, but if we want to be able to sell one in the future, we need to move the brand closer to these target groups,” he continues. “These groups aren’t passionate about cars necessarily, but they are passionate about real estate, architecture, and design. So having projects in this area is showing that the brand is evolving, and it makes the brand more appealing to those who might be buying our cars in the future.”

Bentley designers have collaborated with the architects on details large and small, among them the gym, cinema, and Macallan bar. The company has teamed

ABOVE: The hotel brand Edition is introducing residence-only properties, including a Fort Lauderdale location, rendered here.

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Four Season Private Residences Dubai at Jumeirah; a living room in the Peninsula Residences London; the Porsche Design Tower Miami.

PORSCHE DESIGN

with Porsche partner Dezer Development and so will have its own Dezervator and room for up to four cars in each apartment. "You can actually bring your car into your unit and see it from your kitchen or pool and enjoy the look of it," Favey explains. "It's a bit extravagant, but in a way that we think is very close to what the reality of life in Miami is like. The whole concept is quite in tune with what the brand stands for."

Favey says Bentley Miami will definitely not be a one-off. "It would be completely wrong for us to do only one," he insists. "We'll try to have similar projects around the world—in Asia and Europe—but every time expressing a different facet of the brand."

Beyond the automotive category, everyone from Baccarat to Fendi, Missoni, Cavalli, and even Major Food Group (MFG) is working on a branded project in Miami. Casa Tua, which began as a chic private restaurant in the city, is innovating with its launch of Ora by Casa Tua, which melds the concepts of a members club with residential real estate. With the name Ora ("now" in Italian), it's also tapping into the emerging trend of developers inventing new brands specifically for real estate, giving the projects distinct identities and DNA.

Fortune International has also created its own top-tier brand, Jade, which has evolved into a full-fledged portfolio with four sites in Miami and nearby Sunny Isles, along with the tri-tower Jade Park now rising in Asunción, Paraguay. Fortune's Defortuna says the brand, although new and relatively modest in scale, has been a strong draw for South American buyers, many of whom were already Jade residents in Florida. "At least 20 of our Paraguay buyers owned or had previously rented at Jades in Miami," he says. Other developer-devised brands include Icon, also mostly located in Miami, as well as Yoo, which kickstarted the trend more than 15 years ago with residences designed by Philippe Starck.

The blending of hospitality, members clubs, and real estate is perhaps the next big shift, according to Bailey, of Knight Frank. Jacobs, the CEO of Six Senses, describes this triumvirate as the "residence-hotel-club" ecosystem that helps solidify a project's overall sense of community.

In New York, the world's third-largest branded-residences market, the new Aman perfectly exemplifies this trend, with ultra-luxury residences, a five-star hotel, and a private club all set within a stunningly restored Art Deco building. While this troika might not necessarily work for every operator—members clubs, for instance, typically find the most success in urban areas—they illustrate the increasing desire of top-end buyers to have every imaginable indulgence under one roof. The familiar brand name provides all sides with security and confidence, particularly in markets where wealth may still be new and the long-term returns of luxury real estate still untested.

As the sector continues to grow, perhaps the biggest downside for prospective buyers will be facing the same quandary that vexes them every morning in their closets (Armani or Versace?) and garages (Porsche or Bentley?). But with options popping up around the globe, maybe the answer is one of each. ●

With additional reporting by Mark Ellwood

A worker handles tobacco inside a curing barn in Lázaro Peña, in the Partido region of Cuba. OPPOSITE: *A local's cache.*

ON A ROLL

A new cigar boom is in full swing, and nowhere is that more joyously celebrated than at the annual Festival of Havana.

By **NICHOLAS FOULKES** Photography by **TOM PARKER**

Forty years ago, the Rolling Stones released "Undercover of the Night." Not one of their most successful singles, it peaked at No. 11 on the U.K. charts, but it was accompanied by a memorable video depicting an ill-fated evening that kicks off at a lavish poolside party on the sprawling grounds of a heavily guarded mansion.

On the night of March 1 earlier this year, I find myself at that party. Or close enough. It recalls the oppressive, humid, tropical heat and that unique Latin American atmosphere in which anything can, and probably will, happen: the wild fervor of the Stones video; the magic realism of the novels of Márquez and Allende; or, in the case of this evening, a man clad in an illuminated suit of armor rocketing out of the viridian waters of a large kidney-shaped pool with spraying jets elevating the flyboard beneath his feet.

Moving in time to an epic soft-rock instrumental booming out across the sticky night air, he propels himself to the top of the palm trees surrounding the pool, swoops back down to skim the surface, and backflips, spinning head over heels, leaving behind a jet of water tracing his parabola in the inky sky. So unexpected and bizarre is his appearance that some time passes before I notice that he's carrying a box. He carefully lowers himself until he's hovering just inches above the surface of the pool—then glides slowly toward a glamorously clad model standing at the water's edge and, taking the utmost care not to soak her dress, proffers her the box, which, it turns out, is packed with cigars.

It is indeed a moment worthy of Márquez: Part Robert Downey Jr.'s Iron Man, part James Bond wannabe, this is the culminating moment of an evening dedicated to the launch of the Bolívar New Gold Medal cigar. Although what flyboarding has to do with handmade cigars, or for that matter their namesake early-19th-century South American liberator, is not immediately apparent.

We are halfway through the weeklong 23rd Festival of Havana, and around 1,500 cigar lovers have gathered at one of the Cuban capital's "protocol houses," lavish venues for official entertaining—in this case a sprawling Oscar Niemeyer–esque cantilevered structure on a slope. Impressive though it is, the modernist grandeur of the building is easily overpowered by the event taking place. The flyboarder is just one among many attractions.

On stage at one end of the garden, a man in front of a huge screen is delivering a Steve Jobs–style keynote. I presume he is lauding the qualities of the new Bolívar, but it's difficult to hear him over the screaming trumpets of the nearby dance band, not to mention the brouhaha coming from crowded food and beverage stations dispensing everything from chunks of roast pig to coffee and chocolate milk spiked with rum. On one of the terraces, the selfie station (with the words "New Gold Medal" spelled out in large illuminated letters) is doing brisk business with hostesses kept busy being photographed alongside large men in guayaberas clutching plastic ballistics lockboxes of cigars the size of mini sarcophagi. And all the while, a light show scythes through the nimbus of fragrant blue cigar smoke hanging above partygoers' heads.

Inside the cavernous hall are more food stations and another band with three drum kits, belting out deafening Cuban toe-tappers to an utterly indifferent, mainly Chinese crowd waving wads of hyperinflationary Cuban banknotes in the air as if in a betting ring, in order to catch the attention of the vendors of the Bolívar. Occasionally a body detaches itself from the writhing mass, triumphantly laden with carrier bags bulging with boxes of cigars.

It's a typical night during the Festival del Habano. After a week of launches and parties, Friday evening features a gala in honor of Línea Maestra, a new range of Partagás cigars: seated dinner for 1,200, a charity auction, and a variety performance including appearances by Cuban queen of bolero dance music Migdalia Hechavarría, still wiggling her hips in her early 80s; numerous dance troupes; one or two choirs; most of a carnival procession; and a Boney M. concert.

Presented with all of this, you may well be asking, "Why?" The truth is, right now, handmade cigars are enjoying the sort of popularity not seen since the early 2000s, when the world went cigar mad and every celebrity was photographed with a smoldering "stick" clamped between their jaws—not just Jack, Arnie, et al.,

Central Havana, still a bastion of midcentury cars

FROM LEFT: *Guests at Club Havana on the opening night of the festival; a factory worker rolling sticks; a Club Havana partygoer samples the merchandise.*

but also Penélope Cruz, Madonna, and Cindy Crawford. Back then, even White House scandals involved cigars.

"The New Cigar Boom: Handmade cigars are selling at levels not seen in 20 years," blared a headline in *Cigar Aficionado* in the summer of 2021. Grand View Research reported 362 million handmade cigars were imported into the U.S. in 2019, breaking a spending record set in 1997. In 2021, that number jumped to more than 456 million, up 25 percent from 2020. Total volume for all types of cigars also climbed to an all-time high of 15.25 billion sticks that year. And if the feeding frenzy in Havana this year is any indication, things are only getting crazier. Jemma Freeman, owner of the U.K. cigar importer Hunters & Frankau, has noticed a dramatic growth in the premium market: "We estimate demand has tripled in the last 24 months, and there has been a 150 percent increase in [non-Cuban] sales over the last two to three years."

A generation barely born during the last boom is getting into cigars, my sons included. Max, age 26, works for Davidoff; his younger brother, Freddie, is at this year's festival shooting a short film about cigar making; and as a family, we make a YouTube show about cigars called *Foulkes & Sons* that we began during the pandemic and have continued ever since.

"There are many more people trying cigars, and a younger age profile is interested," says second-generation London cigar merchant Eddie Sahakian, a former banker who left finance to join Davidoff, his family's business, and who is in Havana with his father for the festival. "We are seeing groups of young friends gathering with cigars. A day doesn't pass without someone coming in to try a cigar for the first time. It links in with the growth of social media."

According to Sahakian, this has made the idea of enjoying a cigar less daunting. "Even before they come into the shop, there is a familiarity," he explains. "They have watched the videos we make on YouTube and Instagram. A new, younger smoking class is emerging. They are not addicts; they are enthusiasts. Covid was this incubator of interest for all hobbies but particularly cigars, whiskeys, and watches. There is so much overlap with watches: New-generation cigar lovers are observant of what you are wearing." Sahakian has a couple of Audemars Piguets and some of his father's old Rolexes, but in Cuba he is wearing one of his complete set of MoonSwatches. "It's similar to the whiskeys: They are talking about pairings of cigars with collectible whiskeys."

Evidence of this alliance of interests is to be seen all around the festival. During the packed week of events, there are numerous cigar-and-spirit tastings: Hunters & Frankau is holding a Ramón Allones Aniversario 225–and–vintage rum tasting on the terrace of the new Grand Packard hotel; while Pacific Cigar, which distributes Havanas in the Far East, is hosting a sake-and-cigar masterclass. As for watches, at the festival last year I bumped into one of the world's leading Patek collectors, while the top lot at this year's auction is a massive humidor of Cuban Cohibas accompanied by a unique Audemars Piguet Code 11.59 minute repeater.

“WE CAME TO THE DECISION THAT WE NEEDED TO PLANT EXACTLY THE AMOUNT OF TOBACCO FOR THE INFRASTRUCTURE THAT WE WOULD BE ABLE TO REBUILD IN TIME FOR THE HARVEST.”

How very different this night is to the one 24 years earlier when I presented myself in a white linen suit for what ended up being the very first of the festivals. I was trying to talk my way past an armed guard, as my invitation had been stolen and sold on the black market. Customary blandishments having failed, I mustered all my courage, tried not to look at the pistol at my obstacle’s hip, and said, “I have been nominated as Havana Hombre of the Year.”

As it happened, this was entirely true. (Many nominations later, I won the prize, albeit with my name misspelled on the trophy.) Stranger still, my declaration acted like a password. The young conscript regarded me as if I were a man of substance and almost saluted as he opened the gate. Fidel Castro made an appearance halfway through dinner to give one of his shorter speeches (just under an hour) and provide moral support to the auctioneer selling locally produced figurative humidors. Afterward, we trotted off to the Hotel Nacional for a nightcap. No selfies. No social media. No flyboarding. No fireworks. I don’t think that evening was even officially billed as a festival, but history, or rather Habanos S.A., the semi-state-owned commercial entity responsible for marketing all Cuban cigars, would subsequently decide this was the inaugural Festival del Habano.

Today it is probably the largest and most lucrative international event on the Cuban calendar. Think of Art Basel Miami Beach, splice it with the annual Geneva watch jamboree Watches and Wonders, mix in a healthy splash of the elaborately contrived, strutting sprezzatura of the men’s fashion trade fair Pitti Uomo, sprinkle liberally with post-Covid carpe diem spirit, and serve over five days of round-the-clock smoking of the world’s finest handmade cigars. Havana is packed with cigar distributors, merchants, collectors, and enthusiasts, humidor makers, lighter manufacturers, film crews, bloggers, vloggers, TikTokers, YouTubers, influencers, influencers who prefer to be called educators, and even one or two old-fashioned writers such as myself.

Last May, Habanos S.A. recognized the ascension of certain cigars to the luxury-goods pantheon when it announced a price hike for two Cuban brands, Cohiba and Trinidad. (There are two “Cohiba” cigar brands: one from Cuba, which is not permitted to be sold in the U.S., and a U.S.-owned brand of the same name, which is.) From now on, prices around the world for these brands would be aligned with prices in Hong Kong, with Habanos issuing a statement that its pricing policy was now “similar to how other luxury goods like watches, jewelry, or handbags are sold.”

The Cuban Cohiba uses tobacco that undergoes an extra fermentation and is not just a cigar brand here—it’s an entire ecosystem. In addition to all manner of limited, special, and commemorative releases, there are dozens of different sizes across four separate lines: Clásica (including the famous Robusto); the slightly less powerful Línea 1492 (my favorite is the Siglo VI); the darker Maduro series; and the celebrated tree-trunk-sized Behike, which, as well as the extra fermentation, benefits from the inclusion of *medio tiempo*, the name given to the two top leaves of a sun-grown tobacco plant, leaves of extra strength and flavor that do not appear every year. Behike can be likened in celebrity to Château Pétrus or Le Pin. Since its launch in 2010, a Behike, or BHK as it’s known worldwide, has increased in price by as much as 1,700 percent.

All of which should be good news for the cigar industry here in Cuba, and it would be had it not been for what happened in the early hours of September 27, 2022, when Hurricane Ian ripped right through Pinar del Río province, home to the prime tobacco-growing regions. Add to that disaster the effects of Covid, including pandemic-related inflation, and Cuba’s already fragile economy has been pushed to its limits. Back at the end of the 1990s, Cuba was exporting 126 million cigars. Today its ambition is 90 million, but last year the total was just 56 million.

Even so, the official press conference is upbeat about the situation, stating that revenue of $545 million from cigar sales was up 2 percent last year over 2021. Something may be lost in translation. It doesn’t help that the event is held in conference hall 4 while translators have been sent to hall 3, but I come away from the briefing with the feeling that Hurricane Ian, which had destroyed 80 percent of the curing barns in Pinar del Río and which was described as the worst in living memory, is being played down . . . maybe not as an unalloyed benefit for the cigar industry but as the perfect opportunity for Cuban people to unite and overcome a natural disaster with Stakhanovite fervor. Nor is the opportunity lost for officials to blame the U.S. embargo, now over 60 years old and showing no signs of abating, for the difficulty in acquiring agricultural supplies.

Nevertheless, the seriousness of the situation—and the importance of cigars to the local economy, where they jockey for position with tourism, sugar, and nickel at the top of Cuba’s exports—has been reflected in changes at the helm of Tabacuba, the state-owned entity that runs the agricultural-and-industrial side of cigar making, with former economy minister Marino Murillo being placed in control. Although not participating in the general press conference, he makes himself available to *Robb Report* for a private meeting later that day.

IT JUST GETS BETTER AND BETTER. ONE OF THE MOST REMARKABLE PARTAGÁS I HAVE EVER IGNITED, IT CREATES AN INSTANT AND INDELIBLE MEMORY.

Dressed soberly in a guayabera and black trousers, Murillo is an imposing presence, a lifetime as a Cuban power player etched into his no-nonsense features. Although not a tobacco expert, or even, until recently, a smoker, he was "very involved in the financial knowledge of the tobacco industry," he says. "Because as you might know, it helps to finance important elements of the Cuban economy, like food."

Murillo does not mess around. Fearing the destructive impact of the hurricane, he decided to visit the stricken area shortly after sunrise on the morning after Ian hit Cuba. "I was going up the main highway toward Pinar del Río and could feel how strong the wind was—the car was being blown about," he recalls. "It was practically unbearable. When we were halfway there, the driver was telling me, 'Let's go back,' but I said we are already halfway there, so turning back will be just as bad, so let's go on. As soon as I got there, the impact made a great impression upon me. I saw this scene of destruction and knew that we wouldn't be able to plant 11,000 hectares as planned."

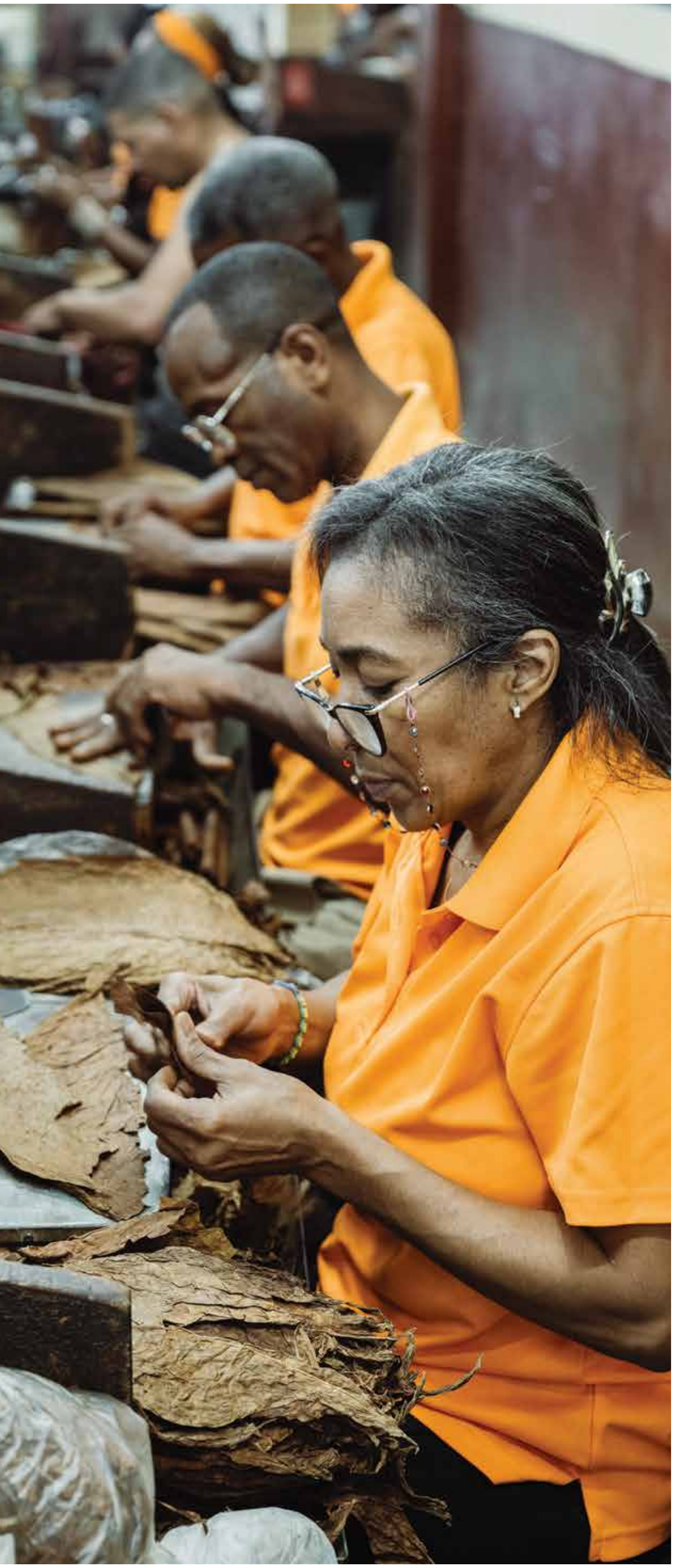
It was not so much the state of the fields—it was very near the beginning of the season, and the plants were still seedlings—but the fact that so many curing barns in which the tobacco hangs, turning from green to brown as it dries, had been destroyed. "We came to the decision that we needed to plant exactly the amount of tobacco for the infrastructure that we would be able to rebuild in time for the harvest," he explains. Clearly a man who gets things done, Murillo mobilized industry, local government, and the banking system, which he persuaded to offer farmers 10-year loans with the first two years interest-free. These were generous terms from a man who, even when in a good mood (as he was while enjoying a cigar with me), does not often take no for an answer.

Another high-level recent appointee, Maritza Gonzalez, copresident of Habanos, also has no doubts about the seriousness of the situation. The first woman to hold this post, she explains that the hurricane was just the latest in a concatenation of unfortunate circumstances. "Covid automatically reduced production by 50 percent because it was necessary to keep extra distance between rollers in the factories," she says. "Also, the economic situation in Cuba last year caused problems with the electricity, which caused a lot of blackouts and interrupted production. It was impossible to buy the petrol that we need to maintain generators, and that also affects production."

Petrol shortages hinder output in other ways, too. "Transportation for the workers to the factory has been disrupted; at the moment it is not possible in some places to guarantee the transportation for staff," Gonzalez explains. "It is a very basic example, but very important, because it affects production." She is a clever, determined woman and confident about returning exports to around 90 million cigars. "But it will take no less than three years."

Things are bad, but they've been that way since the "special period," the euphemism for the collapse of the U.S.S.R., when one year a shortage of string with which to tie the bales of tobacco leaves threatened the harvest. Cuba is used to working around difficulties. As Gonzalez presents the challenges hindering the industry, she also offers me a cigar from her handbag. One of the benefits of life here is that you can enjoy a smoke more easily than elsewhere—facing each other in ludicrously oversized, once-white executive swivel chairs, we ready our cutters and lighters.

The cigar is a Partagás Serie P No. 2, a *piramide,* the shape often, incorrectly, described as a torpedo—a good and dependable cigar but more workhorse than thoroughbred. Or so I think until I clip and light it. It is truly exceptional—the first mouthful delivers an intense sweetness that is simultaneously refreshing, invigorating the palate in a way that is delightfully unexpected. After that it just gets better and better. One of the most remarkable Partagás I have ever ignited, it creates an instant and indelible memory. Provided my mental faculties remain even halfway intact as I age, the memory of these 45 minutes in its company will stay with me until I draw my last breath (hopefully, Havana cigar in hand). It is particularly impressive that such depths and flavors can be achieved in the face of such incredible impediments.



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: *The rolling room at the H. Upmann and Partagás Habanos factory in Havana; politician Armando Trujillo, president of UBPC Felipe Herrera Acea, walking a plantation in Pinar del Río; Jemma Freeman, chair of U.K. importer Hunters & Frankau, at the festival.*

LEFT: *Marino Murillo, the powerful president of Tabacuba.* BELOW: *Cigars on display.*

In the fields and factories, one is struck by the pride taken in the labor of people highly skilled at what they do, who have spent their working lives overcoming shortages, obstacles, and difficulties. On this visit, I stop at a couple of farms in Lázaro Peña, known for producing the wrapper leaf. A farmer may have half a million plants to care for, and between seed and harvest, each plant might be visited up to 150 times; it is painstaking, back-breaking work.

Seeing these plants as they near maturity, cultivated under translucent awnings of cheesecloth, is always an experience. It's as if someone has built a marquee over an expanse of tall, beautiful, plump-leafed foliage spreading as far as is possible to see. The heat is intense; so, too, are the colors. The rust-red loaminess of the iron-rich soil throws the large chlorophyll-bright leaves of the tobacco plants into relief while the billowing muslin canopy provides a third unambiguous band of white. It's as if nature has decided to paint a Rothko in vivid hues. Much in the way that grapes in top vineyards are picked almost individually, so tobacco leaves are harvested one or two at a time from the bottom of the plant up.

Of course, the cultivation of tobacco and the manufacturing of cigars are agricultural and industrial activities, but in Cuba they are more than that: There is also a cultural dimension. Like watchmaking in Switzerland or viticulture in the Gironde, cigar making has been a way of life here for centuries. I am visiting a curing barn, where

> THE SIGHT OF THOSE NIMBLE FINGERS ON THE JUST-PLUCKED LEAVES RETURNED HER TO HER CHILDHOOD ALMOST 50 YEARS AGO, WHEN AS A YOUNG GIRL SHE AND HER SCHOOLFELLOWS HAD LEFT THEIR LESSONS TO WORK THE LAND.

the leaves are sewn together in pairs and suspended in the lofty darkness to begin their transformation from verdant green to brown, when, all of a sudden, a woman with whom I am taking the tour, formerly an economics professor at Havana University and a quondam senior executive at Habanos, begins to get quite emotional—not tearful but clearly touched by what she's seeing.

A minute later she is working alongside two women dexterously stitching together tobacco leaves. She explains that she grew up in Pinar del Río during the optimistic decades shortly after what is still unironically referred to as the Triumph of the Revolution, and at the time of the tobacco harvest, schoolchildren would spend a month toiling on the plantations: boys in the fields, girls in the curing barns. The sight of those nimble fingers on the just-plucked leaves returned her to her childhood almost 50 years ago, when as a young girl she and her schoolfellows had left their lessons to work the land. A lifetime has passed, yet the actions remain familiar—a deeply embedded muscle memory.

The best part of any visit to the campo is the chance to stop in at the Tobacco Research Institute, a low brick building surrounded by neatly clipped hedges, whose unassuming appearance belies the remarkable work being conducted inside. You might call this the genetic memory bank that stores what makes Havana cigars unique: the rich black tobacco first identified in 1907 as *Nicotiana tabacum var. havanensis.*

Although now in his 80s and officially retired, Eumelio Espino still comes into the research center most weeks. Like the building in which he spent much of his working life, you would not give him a second glance, or if you did all you would see is a wiry, below-average-height pensioner in a neatly pressed, short-sleeved yellow shirt and baggy chinos. But, by rights, there should be a statue erected in his honor at every tobacco plantation the length and breadth of the nation. Cuba was estimated to have lost 90 percent of its tobacco production in 1980 because of an outbreak of blue mold. Pesticides provided a short-term solution, but Espino was the genetic scientist who identified a strain of Cuban black tobacco that was resistant to this infestation, enabling the country to overcome its phylloxera moment.

I first met Espino in 2010, when he introduced me to the mysteries of the *medio tiempo,* the sacred leaf responsible for the unique flavor of the Behike. "Legend" is a term abused and overused. In Espino's case, it is appropriate, and I am happy to report that, although he retired as director of the institute a decade ago, he is still active in the industry.

That is the thing about cigar making in Cuba: You never really leave it. I also renew my acquaintance with Arnaldo Vichot, who started work in cigars in the early 1950s. Over his long career, he blended smokes for HRH the Duke of Windsor, who liked mild aromatic tobacco, and the late Palestinian president Yasser Arafat, who required something so punchy that Vichot had to include two leaves of the potent *ligero* in every cigar.

Vichot worked as master blender at Partagás into his late 80s, devising every blend for Bolívar and Partagás for two decades, retiring only in 2018. When I arrive at the Partagás factory, this cheerful nonagenarian is there visiting former colleagues, and to judge from the shouts of greeting and chants of "Vichot! Vichot!" he is regarded as fondly and fiercely as any sports or music star.

Meanwhile at El Laguito, a large mansion that once belonged to a treacle baron and is now the home factory of Cohiba, I am privileged to meet 75-year-old Yolanda Medina. In 1967 she became one of the first women cigar rollers in post-revolutionary Cuba, joining the all-female team at El Laguito charged with creating Castro's favorite cigar, the elegant wand of tobacco known as the Laguito No. 1. Back in the febrile 1960s, this job had required high-security clearance, and at first production moved location every few months. Medina was considered for the job only because her uncle was one of El Comandante's bodyguards. Thus began a life in cigar making.

The new era that Havana cigars are now entering was built on the efforts of Medina, Vichot, Espino, and thousands like them, but as young at heart as those individuals may be, they belong to a generation fading into history. The starkest instance of how much the cigar world is changing comes near the end of the closing gala, the importance of which is underlined by the attendance of the Cuban president.

After dinner and awards but before the concert, the penultimate event of the gala evening is the auction. This used to be an almost quaint affair, the gavel wielded by Simon Chase, a British authority who would don black tie to take to the rostrum. On the evening of that first festival back in 1999, Fidel Castro even lent Chase a hand on stage and signed the lots. The entire auction raised $750,000 and was judged a rousing success, with gasps all around the room at the $250,000 paid for 200 Cohiba Gran Coronas, a special size made to celebrate the new millennium. This year just a single lot of six fetches below $1 million, with the star entry of Cohiba humidor and AP minute repeater garnering $4.5 million, almost as much as all six lots in 2020, the last festival before the intervention of Covid. The total is a staggering $11.8 million.

Nor are the purchasers the usual suspects. The leading Mexican cigar collector is knocked out of the bidding at $900,000. Tonight the big winners are from China and the Far East— something perhaps not unconnected with the fact that this is the first festival for Habanos with its new shareholder, a Hong Kong–based consortium that bought out Imperial tobacco, the previous shareholder, in a deal rumored to be worth over a billion dollars.

Elsewhere on the island there are signs of Sino-Cuban cooperation—even the body-scanning equipment at José Martí Airport comes from China. Forget the Cuban Missile Crisis: Chinese soft power has succeeded where the U.S.S.R. failed. With this new investor, the augury for the cigar industry is good. Money is clearly no longer an issue, nor, one imagines, will be supplies. With help from new friends in the East, problems getting fertilizer and equipment may soon be sorted, and those curing barns will be reerected sooner than you might think to enable 90 million cigars to be exported from Cuba each year.

I only hope that by the time proper export levels are resumed, I will still be able to afford them. ●

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The exterior of the recently renovated Venice Simplon-Orient-Express is clean as a whistle.

Back on Track

A growing crop of redesigned, redeployed sleeper trains will transport you to another era.

By **Lucy Alexander**

To celebrate her 25th birthday in December, Natalie Belden decided a trip to Paris with her boyfriend was the only way to go. But after booking the voyage, the Washington, D.C.–based pharmaceutical sales representative happened to check tickets for the Venice Simplon-Orient-Express (VSOE)—a luxury train service on her travel bucket list. "Somehow there was an opening for the day after my birthday, for two people," she says. "It was a one-night from Vienna to Paris. We weren't even planning on going to Vienna." But she rearranged her itinerary anyway. "That's how badly I needed to go on this trip. I have been wanting to go on this train for years and years and years."

What's so special about this particular locomotive? "It's the lure of being in Europe and getting that old-timey feel," Belden explains, "but also being on this luxurious train that is so glamorous, and you have cocktails and Champagne." Even though the only lodging she was able to snag was a Historic Cabin, the VSOE's smallest room category, the experience didn't feel like settling.

"It literally looks like a movie, like you're getting on a Disney ride," she says—and everything from the service to the food left an impression. She recalls a waiter at lunch telling her, "Today we have scallops with truffle, but if you don't want this, chef can prepare anything else for you." Here at home, she adds with more than a modicum of understatement, "there's nothing like that."

To be sure, in the U.S., train travel is often the option of last resort. Most of us would rather drive or fly than trundle around in a quaint metal box that costs more and takes longer. In Europe, Asia, Africa, and Australia, however, a growing number of affluent American visitors are choosing rail for exactly those reasons: the slow pace, old-world ambience, and luxurious appointments that put it on a par with other elite experiences. In the world of ultra-luxury rail cruises, one night in a 100-year-old sleeper car can set you back more than $15,000—and, increasingly, the cars sell out months in advance.

Old-school train travel has no intention of trying to compete with the efficiency of jet-setting. Speed's not the goal. Rather, the rail alternatives that have been springing up worldwide are focused on making five-star (stationary) hotel suites seem passé by one-upping them with ever-more lavish experiences. Leading the expansion in Europe are Belmond, the luxury travel operator owned by LVMH, and Accor, the French hotel group—both of which, confusingly, use the Orient Express brand name.

The nostalgia for the well-known route from Paris to Istanbul, immortalized by Agatha Christie's 1934 bestseller *Murder on the Orient Express,* plays a major role in the brand's extraordinary longevity. Christie was a frequent passenger, accompanying her archaeologist husband to Syria and Iraq, and today's services attempt to re-create that golden age of travel, with more marquetry, lacquer, and crystal than one could ever hope to find on Amtrak or even on Europe's no-frills state-run train network.

Simon Pielow, director of the Luxury Train Club, a U.K.-based travel agency, puts the surge in interest down to the slow-travel movement and the desire to find "convivial company, rediscover romance, and dress up," noting, "we have never been busier."

To meet demand, Belmond is adding new cabins to its VSOE train, which has dominated Europe's luxury train market for 40 years. In 1982, James Sherwood, a shipping-container magnate and owner of the Hotel Cipriani in Venice, decided to resurrect the Orient Express to ferry customers from Paris to the Italian city. The original service had been established in 1883 by Georges Nagelmackers, a Belgian entrepreneur who brought the American Pullman–sleeping car concept to Europe. But it was disbanded in the 1970s, a victim of cheap air travel.

The VSOE's Grand Suites are themed after European capitals. This marquetry-filled space is dedicated to Vienna.

Sherwood "set about a spree of acquiring original carriages and restoring them," says Gary Franklin, vice president of trains and cruises for VSOE. Today, those restored "wagon-lit" sleepers, the oldest of which dates from 1926, hold the train's 72 Historic Cabins—the kind Belden counts herself as lucky to have booked—with seats that convert into bunks and shared bathrooms down the hall. Prices start from about $4,100 per person per night. Between 2018 and 2021, some original cars were converted into six luxury en suite cabins known as Grand Suites, in which a one-night trip costs upwards of $12,200 per person. In June, a new intermediate suite category will launch, starting at about $8,072 a head. Most routes are one-nighters linking an ever-expanding list of European cities, with a few longer loops starting and ending in Paris. To preserve its rarity and mystique, VSOE runs the namesake Paris-to-Istanbul journey just once a year.

A commitment to decorative panache seems to be an important part of the appeal. "I'm probably biased," says Franklin, "but I think [the VSOE trains] are like works of art." The new suites will feature marble en suite bathrooms and a lounge that transforms into double or twin beds. The Art Deco ornamentation is nature-themed with, for example, "vivid velvet greens and intricate flower marquetry" in the La Campagne (countryside) Cabin.

The Grand Suites, each of which is themed around a European capital, come with underfloor heating, private dining, free-flowing Champagne, caviar on arrival, and chauffeured transfers to and from the train. Artisans from Parisian ateliers have designed every detail, from mosaics to lacquered furniture to Lalique glass. Belmond intends to add more Grand Suites in the coming years.

But looks aren't this train's only strong suit: The VSOE's staff puts as high a premium on service as its designers do on interiors. "The legend is that the bar will never close while there's a customer in there," says Franklin. "People who are looking to celebrate will find a lot of kindred spirits on board the train."

That's what Natalie Belden found during her trip. "As you get on, you no longer have to worry about anything: Your bags are already being brought to your cabin; a glass of Champagne is given to you; you meet your butler, who is on call for you every second," she recalls. "So immediately I was like, 'Well, this is amazing.' "

"IT LITERALLY LOOKS LIKE A MOVIE, LIKE YOU'RE GETTING ON A DISNEY RIDE."

And the novelty of the experience (plus the tight quarters) means there's nowhere to hide lapsed efforts. Not that Belden noticed any. "I think that flying first class or by private jet is so routine now that the details are sometimes overlooked," she says. "And there was not a single detail that was overlooked in this experience."

The appetite for luxury trains is such that the VSOE is getting a rival. The right to operate a train under the name Venice Simplon-Orient-Express (the name comes from the Simplon Tunnel, which connects Brig, Switzerland, to Domodossola, Italy, via a shortcut under the Simplon Pass, though today the VSOE takes a different route through the Alps) is licensed to Belmond from SNCF, the French national railway operator, which inherited the remnants of the original service. After first partnering with SNCF in 2017 to develop the Orient Express brand, Accor now controls the name.

Accor intends to apply the brand name to a wide range of luxury travel experiences, including hotels and a sailing yacht as well as two Orient Express trains, which, like the VSOE, are made up of refurbished vintage rail cars. The first, an Italian service called Orient Express La Dolce Vita, will launch in 2024, composed of 1970s cars. The second, simply called the Orient Express, will launch in 2025, running on a slightly different route between Paris and Istanbul than the VSOE. Accor's new Orient Express will travel via Munich and Vienna, stopping daily "to experience amazing wineries, castles, and so on," says Guillaume de Saint Lager, vice president of Accor's Orient Express. By contrast, the VSOE stops in Bucharest and Budapest, where guests stay overnight in five-star hotels.

Accor will follow suit once it begins opening Orient Express hotels in the cities served by its trains, taking the example of Sherwood and Nagelmackers, who, says de Saint Lager, "created

> ***"EVERYTHING IS GOING FASTER AND FASTER, AND LUXURY NOW IS HAVING TIME AND USING IT FOR THE RIGHT PURPOSE."***

the first international [hotel] chain from Paris to Beijing," with the aim of "driving, defining, crafting the experience of your guests, making sure that they will buy tickets from you, travel with you, stay in your hotels. And that's exactly what we are doing today." The Orient Express La Minerva hotel will open in Rome next year, and the Orient Express Palazzo Donà Giovannelli in Venice will follow soon after.

Pre-reservations for La Dolce Vita have already opened for journeys connecting Rome with either Venice, Tuscany, or Sicily, at prices starting from about $2,200 per person per night. The cars have been refurbished by design house Dimorestudio to reflect midcentury Italian style—and are straight out of a *Mad Men* set, with furnishings that nod to the period, brass detailing, and walls of smoked mirror.

The Orient Express will consist of 17 cars from a 1920s and '30s set Accor acquired after a researcher tracked them down at the Polish-Belarusian border in 2015. French architect Maxime d'Angeac is overseeing the design, taking a more contemporary approach than VSOE. For example, guests can watch chefs at work through a glass wall separating the kitchen from the dining car, which has a mirrored ceiling and shimmering bronze wall panels. In the vaulted-ceiling bar car, emerald velvet Art Deco banquettes are arranged in little nooks around circular tables, each of which will have a call button for Champagne and a clock that chimes at the dinner hour.

The suites are arrayed in velvet, leather, and glossy mahogany paneling, with curvaceous lines and moody lighting. Headboards feature mother-of-pearl and bronze beading. Several original Lalique *merles et raisins* (blackbirds and grapes) panels survive. All cabins have been remodeled to include en suite bathrooms, and the living room–like areas are reconfigured at night to transform into sleeping spaces. The effect, as with the VSOE, is reminiscent of an ingenious marquetry desk or gaming table, full of unfolding sections and hidden drawers.

Accor's Orient Express will also host a single Presidential Suite, accessed by its own private entrance and decorated with Macassar ebony and rosewood columns, with two velvet-walled bedrooms, a living room and dining area, a gas fireplace, and a bathroom with a tub.

De Saint Lager expects demand to come principally from the U.S. and the U.K., "because American and English people are just mad about trains." But the appetite for luxury train travel exists the world over, from the Maharajas' Express, which tours the historic cities of Northern India, to Austra-

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: The Golden Eagle's nostalgic bar car; a rendering of superyacht designer Thierry Gaugain's futuristic G-Train; the voluptuous design of the lounge on Accor's Orient Express La Dolce Vita.

lia's the Ghan, which journeys between Adelaide and Darwin through a desert landscape. Belmond has a portfolio of six trains, including two in Peru and one exploring Southeast Asia, though none matches the VSOE for luxury. Pielow, of the Luxury Train Club, recommends Rovos Rail, in South Africa, and Japan's Seven Stars in Kyushu, though demand for the latter is so high that tickets are allocated by lottery and are "extra-super-difficult" to acquire.

One to watch, he adds, is Le Grand Tour, which will start traversing France's wine regions this autumn. Created by Puy du Fou, which operates historical theme parks, the service will run two-day trips from Paris to Reims and Beaune, as well as a six-day loop through Provence, Saint-Émilion, and the Loire Valley, stopping to visit châteaux en route. Prices for the 18 en suite cabins range from about $3,050 to $10,890 per person per night.

On board, the experience will focus on the French *art de vivre* and gastronomy, according to a Puy du Fou spokesperson, with menus designed by three-Michelin-starred chef Alexandre Couillon. The cars, which date from the 1960s, have been decorated in Belle Epoque style, with swaths of fringed velvet drapery, lacy tablecloths, and gold braid.

The same pastiche 19th-century aesthetic prevails at Golden Eagle Luxury Trains, a 30-year-old former Russia specialist that has pivoted to European and Central Asian tours and is enjoying a spike in popularity. Bookings on its Danube Express—which explores some of Eastern Europe's more remote corners, including a Castles of Transylvania tour—have increased by more than 20 percent in the past year, with passengers coming predominantly from the U.S., according to Joely Garland, the company's marketing manager. Suites are "nostalgic," she says. Chic is not the point. The idea is that "when you step on the train, you have gone to another world and a different time."

If the decor is conservative, the destinations are decidedly adventurous, especially the 16-day Caspian Odyssey from Armenia to Kazakhstan. It's the most expensive trip in Golden Eagle's Silk Road collection, at $56,895 per person for an Imperial Suite. Highlights include visits to the Armenian monastery of Geghard, a private performance of Georgian polyphonic singing in the ancient cave city of Uplistsikhe, night viewing of the Darvaza burning gas crater in Turkmenistan's Karakum desert, and tours of the historical Uzbek cities of Khiva, Bukhara, and Samarkand.

Across the board, the growth trend is for the most elevated, expensive experiences. In May 2024, Belmond will add a new Grand Suite category to its Royal Scotsman service, with prices ranging from $3,210 to $5,125 per person per night. The train, which tours the Scottish Highlands, boasts a spa car and an open-air observation area, the only one of its kind in Europe. Trips include visits to remote castles, Jacobite monuments, whisky distilleries, mountains, lochs, white-sand beaches, and royal stately homes. Interest is so high that this year's tickets nearly sold out by the end of March, says Franklin.

The Royal Scotsman's Grand Suites were created by Tristan Auer, a Parisian designer who works with Mandarin Oriental, Four Seasons, and Rosewood hotels when he's not customizing jets, cars, or boats for private clients. For this, his first train project, he collaborated with Scottish craftsmen to design the furnishings, including a Scottish-larch dining table with pewter detailing and fabrics including cashmere and tweeds. For tartans, he worked with Araminta Campbell, the Edinburgh-based textile weavers, to create bespoke patterns: "They do it like the old days, and they're passionate," Auer says.

The only luxury train that does not lean heavily into the heritage theme is still in the concept phase. In 2021, French superyacht designer Thierry Gaugain launched his blueprint for the ultra-modern G-Train, a 14-car palace on rails intended as a private plaything for one wealthy owner. While he waits for the right customer, Gaugain is recruiting a construction team, including a collaboration with Saint-Gobain, a 350-year-old French glassmaking firm whose previous work includes the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles and which now makes glass for spaceships.

The G-Train—with its black, snakelike appearance, digital controls, internal gardens, open-air sections, sophisticated sound and lighting effects, and glass walls that can switch from opaque to transparent—fills a gap in the market for a train that showcases cutting-edge technology rather than replicating the past.

For now, though, the railway vogue is for nostalgia, as the multiple remakes of *Murder on the Orient Express* can attest to. Languorous voyages to the wilder corners of Europe have an analog and restorative appeal in an age of information overload and fractured attention spans.

In his design for the Royal Scotsman, Auer says he aimed to create "a time capsule," not only in the aesthetic sense but also behaviorally. "We thought about trying to push people not to look at their iPhones when traveling on this train," he explains. "To slow down. Everything is going faster and faster, and luxury now is having time and using it for the right purpose."

This gift of pure relaxation was what appealed most strongly to Natalie Belden during her night on the VSOE. "It felt so exclusive, so different from how things work in our lives now. I don't think I looked at my phone once for six hours," she says of the time she spent socializing in the bar car. "You're transported to a different world, and you're not concerned about anything that's happening outside of this train. You just feel like you're traveling through time." ●

Go Your Own Way

For a luxury train experience a little closer to home, you can design your own private railcar and hitch it to any Amtrak train.

The private railroad carriage was once the epitome of luxury transportation in the U.S. "The Vanderbilts and Rockefellers, they all had their private railcar," says David Hoffman, a director of the American Association of Private Railroad Car Owners (AAPRCO). "They would call the railroad and say, 'Hey, can you pull me from here to there?'"

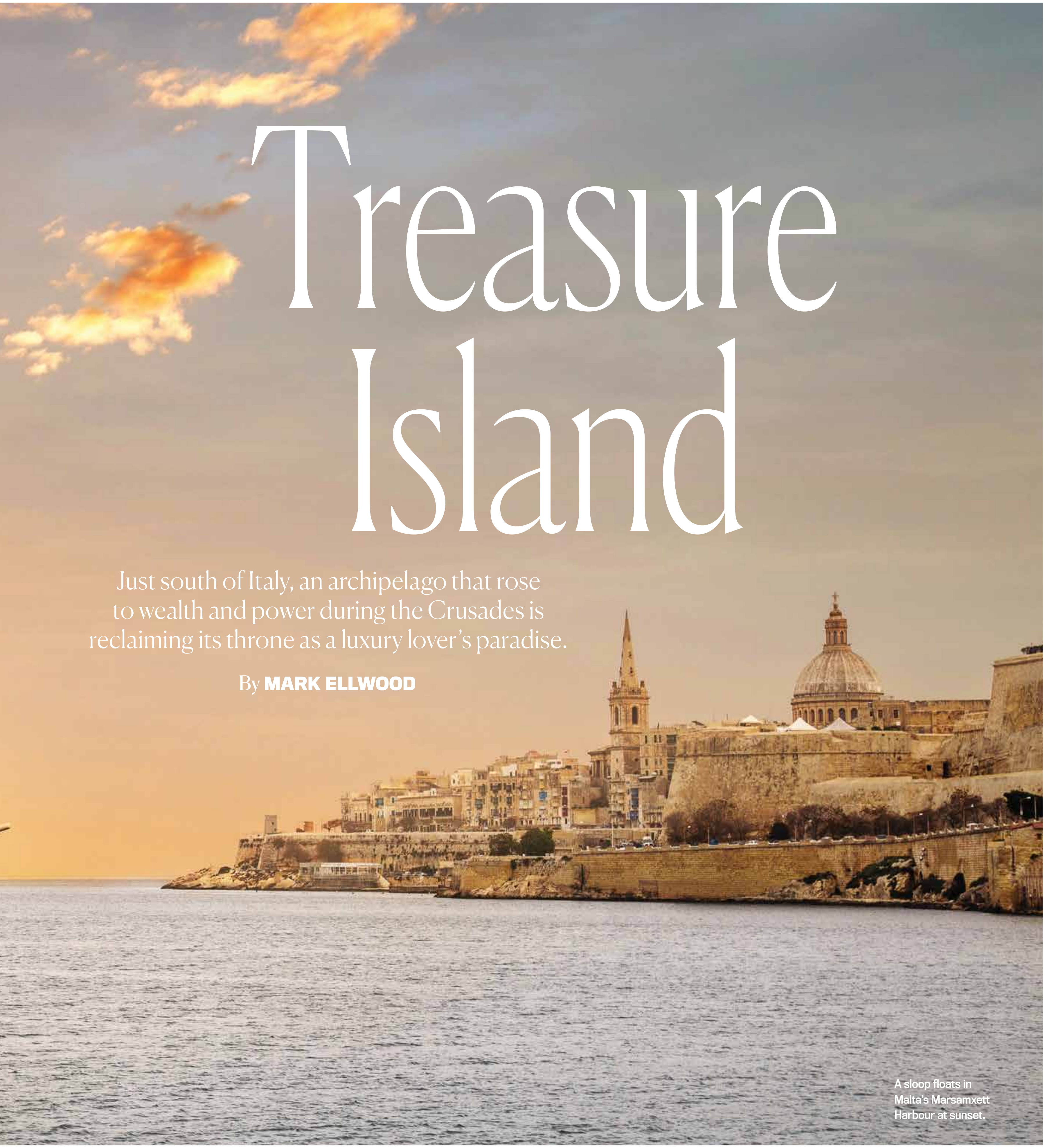
A similar, if less well-known, system operates today: You can buy a disused railcar starting from about $200,000, restore it, and have Amtrak tow you on any of the major American rail routes. "It's kind of a hidden business," says Hoffman, who operates Northern Sky Rail Charters from Milwaukee, Wisc. "You won't believe how many times people say to me, 'I didn't know you could do this.'"

Amtrak is the only locomotive service you can use, and typically it will attach a car or two to a regular commercial service. "The basic fee is about a little over $4 a mile," says Tony Marchiando, AAPRCO's president. Storage is additional; Amtrak charges $2,000 to $3,000 a month.

Modern-day Vanderbilts should expect a trainload of paperwork. Amtrak typically requires 30 days' notice per trip, and cars must meet stringent safety requirements, says Marchiando, including annual inspections, insurance, and specific wiring to comply with Amtrak's power system.

The biggest brokerage is Ozark Mountain Railcar, which sells cars ranging from 40 to 100 years old. A "deluxe" renovation, Marchiando says, will cost "close to a million dollars, [for] new air-conditioning, new plumbing, new electrical systems," and other structural considerations. And that's before you start "redoing the interior totally to modern tastes."

But for some, paying what Hoffman calls "the cost of a really nice house" is worth the experience. His most popular route runs from Chicago to the West Coast through the Rockies, where riders "see sights that you don't see from a car or a plane."



Treasure Island

Just south of Italy, an archipelago that rose to wealth and power during the Crusades is reclaiming its throne as a luxury lover's paradise.

By **MARK ELLWOOD**

A sloop floats in Malta's Marsamxett Harbour at sunset.

They call them Aldo's Fish.

The brightly colored, distinctly midcentury patterns on the plates at Villa Bologna Pottery in Malta were designed by Aldo Cremona, who worked there for more than 70 years. Born deaf to a poor family, he had limited schooling and never learned to speak, communicating instead through his vibrant artwork. The facility's signature scroll design was his handiwork, too, as were a series of water jugs, jauntily daubed with splotches of paint to resemble women. "They were supposed to be saluting admirals, but Aldo didn't like painting men, so he made them ladies instead," says the pottery's owner, Sophie Edwards. Cremona died last year, but there's still a shelf full of those jugs in the workshop acting as templates for the designs. A small sticker indicates each of their names: Violetta with her bedroom eyes, for instance, or Delft-blue Flora.

The workshop itself is almost a century old, founded in 1924 as a philanthropic effort to help employ local women, but it has been reenergized in the three years since Edwards and her husband, Rowley, took over. "Everyone in Malta knows the pottery—the pineapple lamps are popular wedding gifts," she explains. Now, though, the couple hope to build a bigger audience; last year, they opened their first foreign store, in London's tony Holland Park, and launched e-commerce for America this spring. Every piece will continue to be handmade.

It's an unexpected story to those who are at all familiar with Malta. Mention the country and most will think of the military might wielded by the bygone Knights of Malta, and perhaps money, but not making things. Today, though, thanks to an influx of wealthy and design-focused new citizens, the tiny, rocky nation is starting to rebrand itself as a source of, and destination for, serious luxury.

Malta, at just 122 square miles, is composed of three islands: the namesake and largest, plus smaller, rural Gozo, and Comino, a shard wedged between the two. The trio sit squat in the center of the Mediterranean and benefit from naturally deep harbors; such geography and geology made it a squabbled-over strategic possession for centuries, most recently held by the British. (The late Queen Elizabeth lived here as a young wife, and her one-time home will soon open as a museum.)

Malta's contemporary reputation has focused less on force than on finances, as the country has aimed to act as a Mediterranean answer to the Cayman Islands. Its favorable taxation regime burnished its appeal to wealthy Europeans, who can take up residency here and pay minimal taxes. A citizenship-by-investment program, in which a passport is yours for a million or so euros, has increased the numbers of high-net-worth residents from other regions, too. The policy has not been without controversy since the government introduced it in 2013 under former premier Joseph Muscat—and that administration remains embroiled in the scandal around the murder of investigative journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia six years ago, which precipitated Muscat's resignation in early 2020 and continues to swirl.

The Coral Lagoon, also known as Dragonara Cave, is a popular place for a swim at high tide—or taking Instagram shots at low tide.

There has been tourism in Malta over the years, but it's been mostly mass-market. Keen to rebuild after World War II, when the country underwent brutal bombardment by the Axis powers, the Maltese constructed cheap hotels that filled up with sun-seeking Britons and Germans, who provided much-needed economic stimulus in the 1960s and '70s. But such package holidays are falling from favor, and locals are determined to lure a different caliber of client. "We can't sustain huge amounts of people like that anymore," says Maltese interior designer Francis Sultana, who's based in London and is a cultural ambassador for his homeland, where he has a spectacular house. "Malta has to reinvent itself as a place to live that's full of arts and culture and with a wonderful sea around it."

To that end, Malta is working to reposition itself via travel specialists, such as the luxury operator Red Savannah, which will introduce the country as a recommended destination this fall. Its interest reflects the rising profile for Malta among elite travelers, which is the hard-won product of the government's concerted efforts to transform its audience, whether by underwriting new cultural assets, tendering abandoned buildings for renovation, or continuing to expand the citizenship-by-investment scheme. When the first such program filled its quota of 1,800 passports, the government simply launched a second one, slightly tweaked. The firm Latitude Residency and Citizenship helps interested would-be Maltese citizens navigate the red tape. "Americans are the biggest market for Malta now—they're more than half of the applicants," says Jon Green, the firm's cofounder and global sales director, noting that political uncertainties stateside have driven this change. "In the last five or six years, demand for programs like these has skyrocketed from the U.S. Before that, nobody thought it was a viable market for the industry."

Those new, wealthy tourists and part-time residents are a crucial customer base for Sophie and Rowley Edwards. Sophie grew up partly on the island and had always mulled a return. They were married at Villa Bologna, the country house on whose estate the pottery sits. When she was pregnant with her first child, the now 4-year-old Rocco, the couple visited and found the ceramics workshop in a precarious state, operating with just three staff, including Aldo. "You'd rummage around in the basement and find old molds and bits of pottery," she recalls. They set about relaunching the company, retaining its retro aesthetic but sharpening its approach to business. They're now working with interior designers and private clients on custom commissions, all while building a restaurant in the stable block next door to the workshop, an all-day upscale Italian-accented café with its own garden.

Villa Bologna is in the village of Attard, a smallish settlement in the center of the island, but much of the new energy is focused on the country's capital, postcard-pretty Valletta. Sit-

ting on a rocky outcrop next to the deepest harbor on the northern coast, it was built as a single project in the 1570s, which conferred a pleasing uniformity to its architecture. The aesthetic is the same Ottoman-influenced style seen throughout Venice. Valletta was cannily master-planned in a grid layout, allowing sea breezes to pass through downtown as natural air-conditioning; even today, the shadier streets remain surprisingly cool in midsummer.

The old structures here are being artfully redeployed. Take Renzo Piano's 2015 parliament building, a rippled cube rendered in the same honeyed limestone used to erect its 16th-century neighbors. His initial plan to demolish the ruined former opera house next door proved controversial, so he instead repurposed the bomb-scarred site as an outdoor theater that serves as both a memorial and an amenity. Then there's the one-time abattoir that reopened two years ago as the Valletta Design Cluster, a WeWork-meets-workshop complex aimed at creative startups whose primary-color-painted doors and windows have a whiff of De Stijl. Local architect David Felice and his firm, AP Valletta, are working on a major new home for the various artworks and tapestries from the city's cathedral: a glass box grafted onto a series of old houses, earmarked for completion in 2024. And just outside the city walls is arguably the most ambitious creative project in the country: the Malta International Contemporary Art Space, or MICAS, which is set to open its 16,000 square feet of galleries next year.

ABOVE: The living room of interior designer—and local ambassador—Francis Sultana. OPPOSITE, FROM TOP: An aerial view of Camino, one of the country's three islands; the Jungle Room at the Iniala Hotel, one of Malta's few true luxury stays.

It's already a thrilling site to walk around. The iron-beamed skeleton for MICAS's huge glass-walled rooms sits bolted to the remnants of the Old Ospizio, a 17th-century fortress that stored gunpowder safely away from Valletta proper. The museum's modernist design, penned by the Florentine architecture firm IPO Studio, forms a stark contrast to those yellowish, weathered walls. Excavations unearthed ancient ruins—the Romans also saw the strategic value of these islands—and so forced the architects to rejigger their vision; another room now incorporates the big bricks into one of its walls.

On a sunny but brisk March day, the redoubtable chair of MICAS, Phyllis Muscat, picks her

> “Malta has to reinvent itself as a place to live that’s full of arts and culture and with a wonderful sea around it.”

way through the site with curator and board member Georgina Portelli, proudly pointing to the rooftop sculpture garden, which will be home to temporary commissions and permanent pieces by the likes of Michele Oka Doner and Cristina Iglesias. They hope that MICAS will act as Malta’s answer to London’s Serpentine Galleries, a small but noteworthy space ideal for artistic takeovers, or the seaside Istanbul Modern. It’s already attracting attention: Sculptor Conrad Shawcross has committed to a site-specific installation this October, before the venue is even complete. “Malta is heavily branded as a baroque island, and Valletta was at the cutting edge of architecture like that when it was built,” Portelli explains, calling the modernist metal additions a 21st-century continuation of that history.

Similarly, Sultana, the interior designer, stresses that Malta’s move upscale is actually

a return to its roots. Think back to the Knights of Malta, he suggests, the Christian order that combined chivalry, conquest, and care for the needy. Its aristocratic and international members, who helped take Jerusalem during the Crusades and ruled over parts of Greece, Italy, and, briefly, the Caribbean, in addition to Malta, left the island flush with their fortunes. “The Knights were very, very into luxury, so much gold leaf and great paintings,” Sultana says. “So people are not afraid of maximalism here.” He refers to the local aesthetic as “baroque and roll”—as much the Clash as Caravaggio. (Indeed, that serial rebel took refuge here in 1607, fleeing murder charges in Rome, and his largest work sits in the oratory of St. John’s Co-Cathedral.)

“I think of Malta as Marrakech in the Med,” says John Cooney, comparing these islands to the city where Yves Saint Laurent and his entourage formed a chic outpost of creative expats. Cooney is a Swiss Italian entrepreneur who moved to the island with his husband, Kevin Schwasinger, three years ago. Among other ventures, Cooney’s company Forbidden City designed and operated boutiques in Aman’s hotels for several years. He and Schwasinger now live in a converted palazzo originally built for one of the Knights of Malta but are developing a new five-bedroom hotel in a 17th-century complex in what is known as the Three Cities, a trio of towns that share Valletta’s harbor.

The hotel, called Cité Privée Maison Malte, is the first of an intended chain and will open in 18 months’ time alongside 20 residences located on nearby streets, also in old buildings that the couple are painstakingly restoring. Buyers can use the services of the hotel, and they can also deed the properties into the hotel’s rental pool for guests to book. Cooney says the appeal of developing beyond Valletta’s walls is that this part of the island hasn’t yet seen intense, mass tourism, despite being just a short boat ride away—you can take one of the *luzzu,* or Maltese gondolas, and glide across the harbor in less than 10 minutes. “This part is like living in an old Maltese village, before there were cars—for me that’s what is really enchanting,” he says. “You might have an old lady down the street screaming at the top of her lungs at her daughter, but other than that, there’s no noise.”

FROM TOP: *The garden at Villa Bologna; Sophie Edwards inside the pottery workshop she and her husband own on the villa’s grounds.*

Cooney’s project will sit next to the Cospicua Super Yacht Marina, a new berth in the Three Cities with room for more than two dozen vessels at once. Malta has long been a destination for yacht repair—its yards jockey with Montenegro for primacy in the region—but there are now concerted efforts to encourage yachting tourism, too. Mike Mifsud runs Yachting Malta and has worked with the government on a new strategy. “The offering here is disjointed and not properly packaged, and it needs some polishing,” he tells *Robb Report*. Mifsud points out that despite the deep waters surrounding the country where superyachts can easily stop, including a marina in the northeastern city of Msida, there’s a missed opportunity along the rugged southern coast. The area has no marina, but all that’s needed to accommodate large superyachts are a few ocean-floor moorings. The major dive sites lack moorings, too, though prime spots are plentiful; Malta's place at the center of the Mediterranean means that ships have wrecked here since Phoenician times. The lack of luxury retail is a factor as well, while tendering across from the Three Cities to Valletta is complicated because there's nowhere to tie up upon arrival. By the middle of this year, though, Mifsud says that the government should have approved a full-scale superyacht strategy.

The other major issue for Malta's pivot to luxury tourism is even more critical: places to stay. Put simply, luxury accommodation is scarce. It's a legacy, in part, of the way the British treated this possession. Unlike Madeira, Malta became merely a depot rather than a destination, strategically important but rarely considered worth visiting. As a result, there's no grand Victorian-era hotel that would now be ready for a rebirth. The two best-known inns date back to the post-war boom: Corinthia Palace, in Attard, and the Phoenicia, just outside Valletta's main gates. Neither is a truly five-star property, though both have plans to upgrade. Sultana has been engaged to overhaul the former's public spaces and suites, while the latter has mulled adding a series of stand-alone luxury villas overlooking the local marina.

Most exciting, though, is the raft of new hotels that are set to open, such as Casa Bonavita, a project by Sophie Edwards's parents, Christopher and Suzanne Sharp, in a 1760 Baroque mansion they acquired about 12 years ago. The couple are the founders of interiors firm the Rug Company, and Suzanne is Maltese. "We've always had the problem that people say to us, 'Where should I stay in Malta?' And it's really difficult, so we started thinking about the house we bought—it's so large, it was a bit of a folly," Christopher says of the site, which they've since painstakingly repurposed into a 17-room hotel set to bow next spring.

The government is supporting such efforts. It has put a grand former office in central Valletta on the market, expressly for conversion into a high-end hotel; the winning bid will be announced this summer. One of those chasing the deal is British businessman Mark Weingard, who moved to Malta from Spain a decade ago for the financial upsides but quickly embraced the island and its culture. He opened the first truly upscale hotel here, Iniala, which straddles several historic townhomes overlooking that harbor. "When you walk around Valletta, you can get confused," Weingard says. "It's this fusion of East and West, a mix of Jerusalem and Venice." Another mark of his confidence in the destination's uptick: He has just installed L'Enclume's three-Michelin-starred chef, Simon Rogan, at the Michelin-starred Ion Harbour restaurant, only Rogan's second site outside England.

But the biggest project is far from Valletta—indeed, it's on another island entirely: Comino. Barely 1.4 square miles in size, Comino is mostly a protected habitat now, having once been farmland. Just one resident remains, a man in his 70s who lives self-sufficiently on a small plot. There is modern construction on Comino, though, and it's yet another legacy of that rush to mass tourism in the wake of World War II: two connected sites, on the island's northern coast, one a hotel complex and the other a series of hotel-operated villas. They'd slumped from their heyday, booked mostly to package vacationers, and were shuttered four years ago. Malta's government hoped to hand the sites over to a new developer who would reimagine them entirely for luxury tourism—and found that partner in Malta-based Hili Ventures.

"It's this fusion of East and West, a mix of Jerusalem and Venice."

Now surrounded by metal fencing, the abandoned buildings have an eerie quality, shabby but solidly constructed with little consideration for the surrounding countryside. The landscape is typical of Malta: low-lying brushland, free of trees, with clusters of shrubs huddled together against the winds. Hili has pledged to restore the concession's vegetation, in part by uprooting invasive species, while replacing the hotel buildings with more thoughtful structures integrated into the landscape. Those efforts haven't placated multiple local NGOs pushing back against the project, but Hili hopes to lure a high-end international hotelier such as Aman to operate it. Could a world-class resort single-handedly draw luxury travelers to Malta? Only time will tell. ●

THE LOWDOWN

GETTING THERE No airlines offer long-haul flights to Valletta, so most North American visitors arrive via a European hub. For charters within Europe, the Maltese private-jet facility is located at the main airport but has its own stand-alone terminal; try **Hans Jet** for reasonable options. **La Valette Club** can handle VIP customs and arrival.

GETTING AROUND The archipelago's roads can be chaotic. It's smartest to hire a driver to scoot around the islands without white knuckles; **Dacoby** has the best chauffeurs.

ACCOMMODATIONS The top choice is Valletta's **Iniala Harbour House**, with 23 rooms and suites. There are five penthouse-suite-style options—the best, dubbed the Lucija, boasts a private plunge pool. The four-bedroom Hideaway, an annexed property a few doors down from the main hotel, is available for buyouts, too. *From about $382 per night.*

RESTAURANTS In Valletta, try the **Harbour Club** for sundowners. **Gracy's**, owned and operated by British businessman Greg Nasmyth and his wife, Samantha Rowe-Beddoe, is a members' club whose brasserie is open to the public: Come on a Sunday for a buzzy afternoon scene or book the plush private karaoke room downstairs. **Noni** is one of the city's six restaurants with Michelin stars, run by local chef Jonathan Brincat and his sister and maître d', Ritienne. The food is playful and unstuffy: Order the superb, deconstructed prawn cocktail.

Outside the city, try **Carmen's**, a waterfront bar and restaurant on Għar Lapsi on the south coast—casual but disarmingly delicious, especially on a warm spring day. **Il Corsaro**, in the historic town of Żurrieq, is owned and run by an old Italian; think freshly made pasta, menus on chalkboards, and a room full of hungry locals.

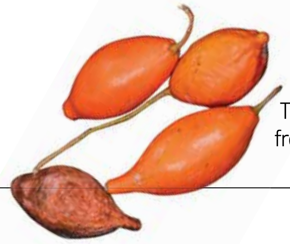
ACTIVITIES Malta doesn't have many appealing sandy beaches; instead, expect craggy edges at the waters. Head down to the southern coast for the quietest perches: The swimming holes at **Wied iż-Żurrieq** are reachable from the rocks, as is the Blue Grotto arch there; the sea off **Għar Lapsi** is easily swimmable, too. The walks in and around **Dingli Cliffs** are spectacular in the late afternoon. For diving, the oldest local club is **Atlam SAC**; standout sites include the Bristol Beaufighter World War II wreck at 124 feet or the SS Polynesian, a French liner sunk during World War I that lies at 223 feet.

OPERATORS **Fischer Travel** and **Red Savannah**, both *Robb Report* Travel Masters, have expertise in the islands. Note that weather is mostly pleasant year-round, but try to avoid January and February, which can be rainy and cold; December is often surprisingly balmy, while midsummer will be brutally hot.

THE DUEL

Forget about returning from vacation with beach selfies and a tan. A whole new industry of luxury "trips"—guided psychedelic journeys that break down inner barriers and provide spiritual healing—is taking hold. Instead of souvenirs and sand in all the wrong places, you may come home with a brand-new outlook on life. But are you destined for a Bwiti fire ceremony at the Root Healing center in Portugal, or a magic mushroom voyage in Canadian wine country with the Journeymen Collective? **Adam Morganstern**

Root Healing Portugal vs. The Journeymen Collective Canada

	Root Healing Portugal	The Journeymen Collective Canada
THE RESORT	A mountaintop villa in the forests of Sintra, Portugal. The retreat is close enough to the Portuguese Riviera for a beach picnic. Lord Byron called the region "a glorious Eden."	A "six-star" luxury estate in British Columbia's Okanagan Valley. Its exact location is not disclosed for privacy reasons, making it difficult for English poets to find.
THE MEDICINE	 Iboga The hallucinogenic second layer of root bark from the rainforest shrub *Tabernanthe iboga*, native to equatorial West Africa.	Psilocybin The psychedelic compound derived from "magic mushrooms." There are around 100 species in the genus *psilocybe*, found primarily in the Americas and Europe.
WHAT IT DOES	Iboga produces hallucinations that some claim increase neuroplasticity, which can help treat addiction, trauma, depression, and the forming of new habits.	Psilocybin also causes hallucinations, as well as an altered sense of time and space, enhanced sensation of colors, and profound reactions to Pink Floyd's *The Wall*.
IS IT LEGAL?	Portugal decriminalized the consumption of all drugs in 2001. But keep your inner rock star focused—you're here for self-improvement, not partying.	There are movements to legalize psilocybin throughout Canada. For now, let's just say restricting its use is . . . unenforced.
WHEN THEY STARTED TRIPPING	 Utilized for thousands of years in ceremonies by the spiritual tradition Bwiti, practiced in Gabon, Cameroon, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.	Art depicting *psilocybe* mushrooms dates back over 6,000 years in Europe, and the fungi are known to have been used in pre-Colombian Mesoamerica.
THE TRIP WITHIN THE TRIP	Two Iboga ceremonies over eight days. Following Bwiti tradition, the medicine is ingested during a fire ceremony. Participants are then led to a candlelit room to lie down while it takes effect.	You can take two journeys over four days, though you can extend your stay to 16. Ignoring Canadian tradition, no beer is served, and Bachman-Turner Overdrive is not played by candlelight.
WHAT ELSE YOU'LL BE INGESTING	You'll have locally sourced organic meals, but on ceremony days, the last dish is served at 2 p.m. On "processing" days, people typically can't handle more than one full meal, fruit, and soup.	The primarily vegetarian menu offers some customization, but there's one thing you won't have a choice about: No alcohol is allowed.
COSTS	$3,400 Includes preparatory calls, a medical screening, an eight-day stay with ceremonies, and follow-ups after the retreat that help integrate your perceptions into your daily life. 	 $11,000 Includes one month of preparation, a medical screening, a four-day stay, and three months of scheduled aftercare with further check-ins as needed.
WOULD IT MAKE A GOOD RISOTTO?	No. The bark tastes bitter and numbs the mouth.	It'd be a tasty way to mask the flavor of magic mushrooms. But be careful: Psilocybin starts to degrade at 162°F, at which point the magic starts to wear off.

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